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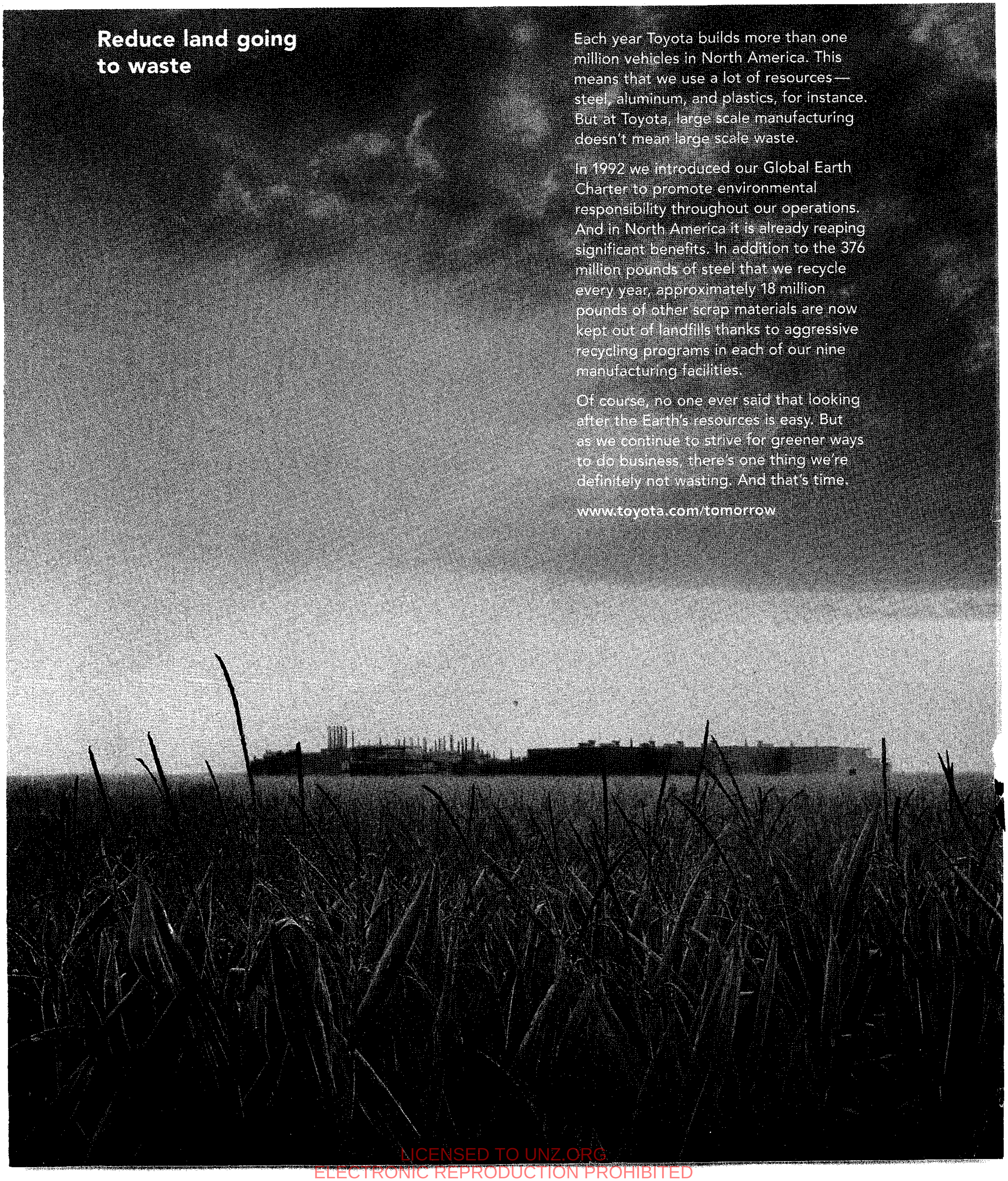

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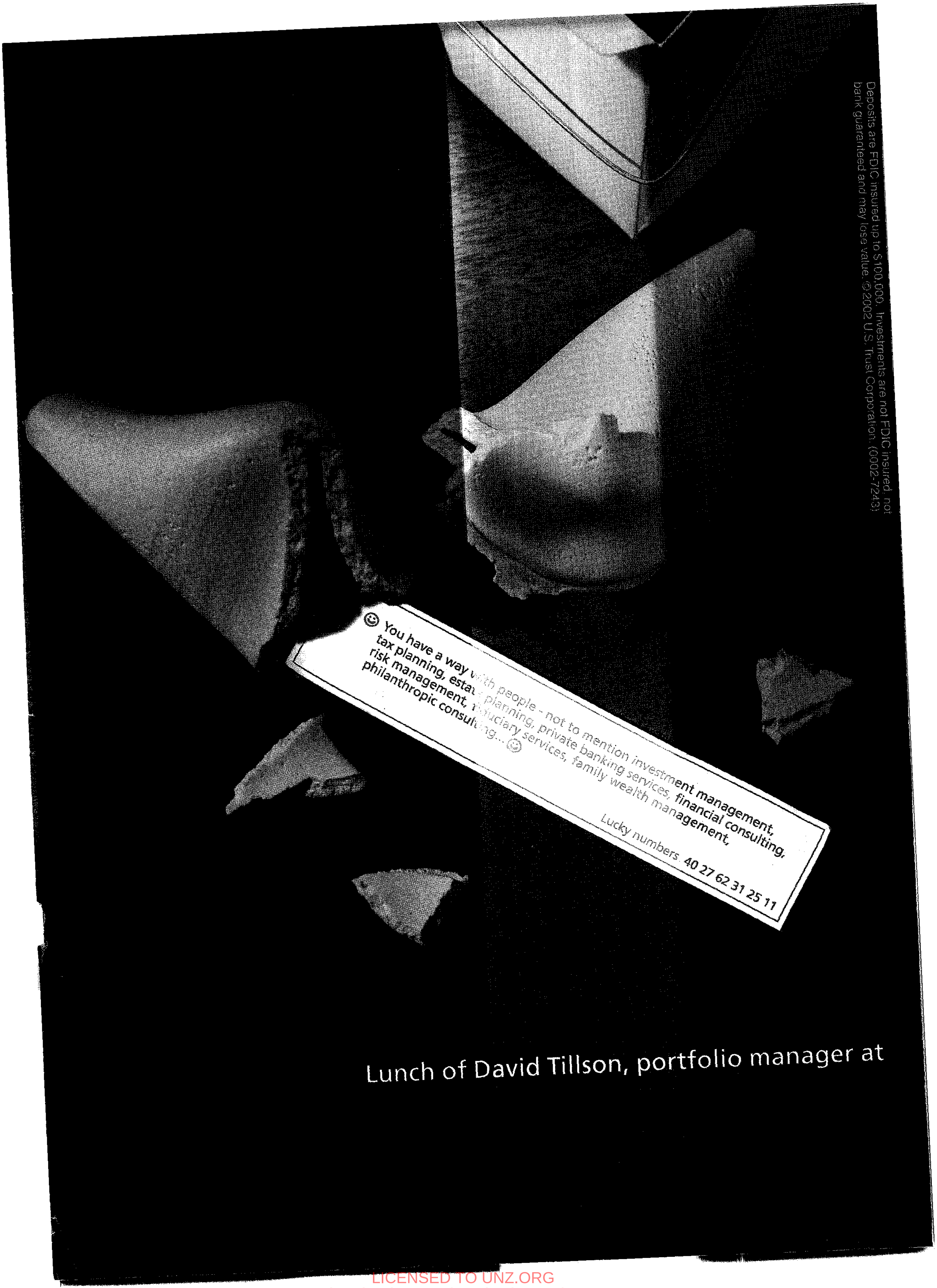
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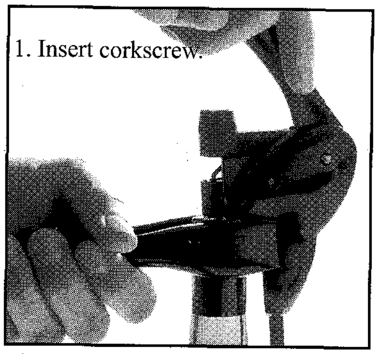

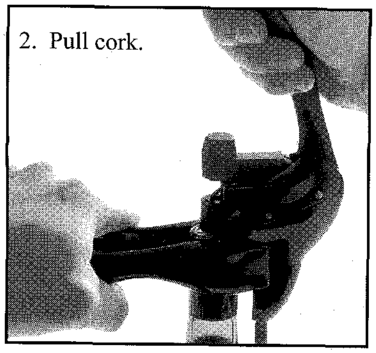

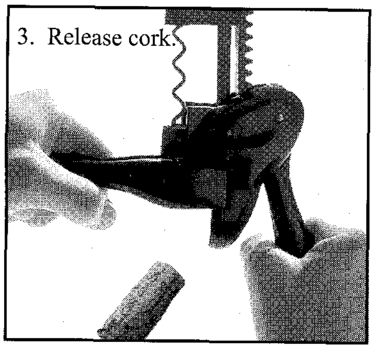

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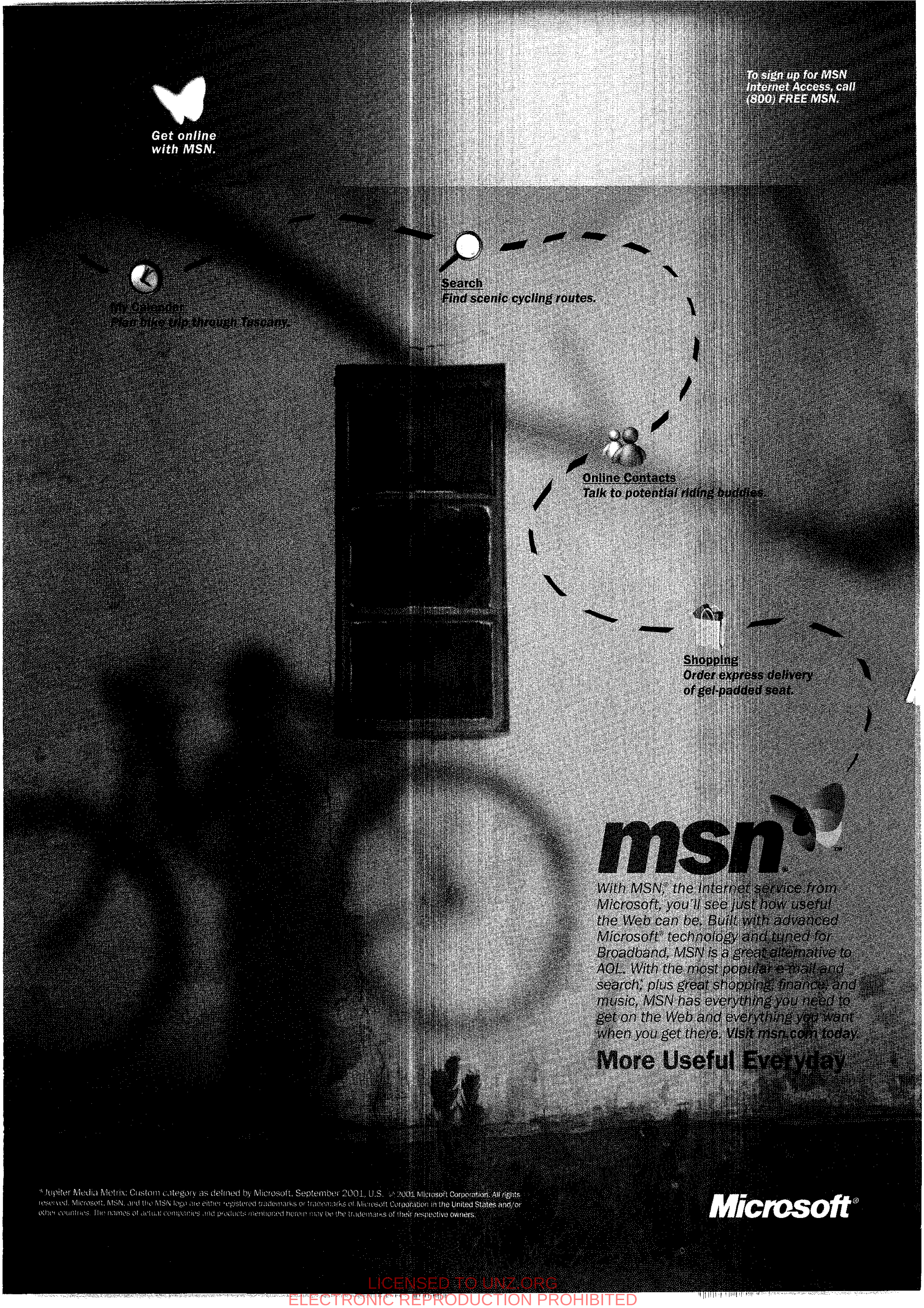
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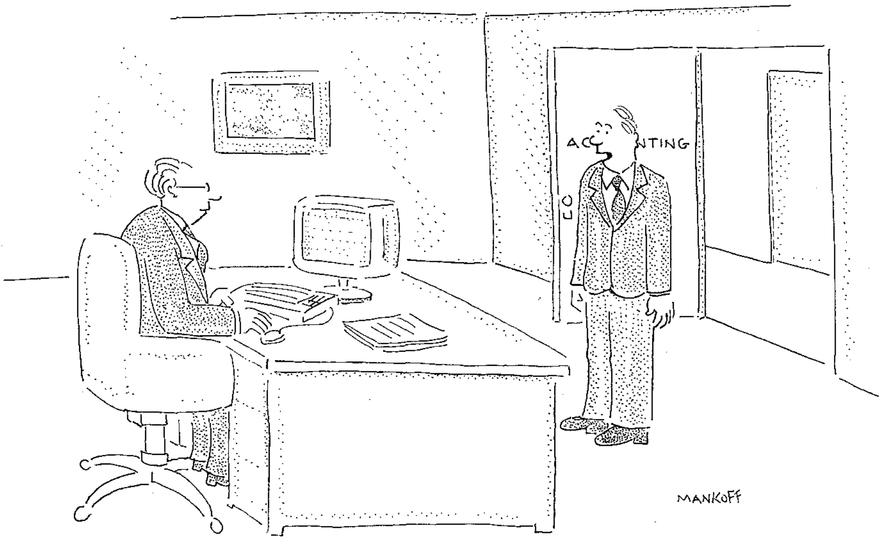

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THE ENRON CASE

As the C.E.O. of a Pacific Northwest utility, I was struck by James Surowiecki's comment, in his comparison of Enron to Drexel Burnham Lambert, that "commodity markets really are the most powerful and efficient way to allocate electricity" (The Talk of the Town, December 17th). Enron's implosion, coupled with the failure of deregulation in California, should have taught him a quite different lesson. Electricity is not a practical commodity. It cannot be stored for expected future shortages, as can cotton. Users cannot easily and quickly switch from electricity to another energy source, as those who use corn and soybeans can. While most Americans are content to allow market forces to determine the availability and cost of pork bellies, they don't feel as sanguine about the supply of electricity. Deregulation freebooters, epitomized by Enron, told us they could do it better, more cheaply. But before deregulation materialized, the United States had the cheapest electrical supply of any major industrialized nation. Privately owned utilities consistently produced sufficient energy at a reasonable cost—because they were regulated. Public utilities, which serve about twenty-five per cent of Americans, did even better, because they were, and remain, answerable to the people who own them: their customers. Enron decided to get rich trying to fix what wasn't broken, and went broke in the process.
Vic Parrish
Richland, Wash.

Surowiecki argues that both Enron and Drexel Burnham Lambert were innovative companies, "the first ones over the ridge," which failed because they "overreached." But there are problems with Surowiecki's analogy: the capital structures of the firms Drexel financed, which were routinely condemned at the time, did, as Surowiecki suggests, turn out to be quite sound (the bonds they underwrote, despite the "junk bond" epithet, had relatively lower default rates than those of other major underwriters), but Drexel failed because some of its practices, specifically allocating capital and insider perks to a preferred coterie of clients, were illegal. By the time the firm was forced to shut its doors, it had been under the public threat of federal RICO prosecution for half a year—which, inevitably, interfered with its ability to attract lenders, an essential part of a securities firm's normal operations. If not for its criminal behavior, Drexel might still be up and running, and profitable. The case of Enron, on the other hand, simply put, appears to be one of a fundamental error in corporate finance: it had been losing a tremendous amount of money, and hiding that fact—quite a different story.
Alexander Polsky
Baltimore, Md.

Enron may have created a new concept in energy market-making, as James Surowiecki suggests, but savvy investors began to suspect failing profitability in the company last year as they drove the stock down from eighty-four dollars a share to about thirty-five dollars. Then, when the facts about Enron's full debt burden and the conflicts of interest of top officers were revealed, investors rapidly devalued the stock virtually to zero. This suggests that the previous success of the stock, if not the business itself, was dependent on concealing this information from the public—and not on the company's farsighted ambition. At the same time, as it turns out, Enron's accounting firm was destroying many of its files. In this light, Enron's part in the lobbying efforts against financial-statement disclosure laws should raise serious questions about the actions of its executives, and how they can now be held accountable.
Martin G. Rosenblatt
Los Angeles, Calif.

•

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27	28	29				

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BEA ARTHUR ON BROADWAY: JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS
The stage and screen star performs songs and reminisces about her six-decade career, accompanied by the pianist Billy Goldenberg. Previews begin Jan. 29. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE BRIDGE IN SCARSDALE
Jacques Lévy ("Oh! Calcutta!") is the director of a new play by Robert Remington Wood, about a bridge designer, his estranged painter wife, who has been institutionalized for twenty-five years, and their son, who reunites them. Preview on Jan. 23. Opens Jan. 24 at 8. (Phil Bosakowski Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 279-4200.)

FOUR
The Worth Street Theatre Company's production of a drama by Christopher Shinn, which examines the interconnected relationships between four people on a single day—the Fourth of July, 1996—in Hartford, Connecticut. Jeff Cohen is the director. Previews begin Jan. 29. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

FURTHER THAN THE FURTHEST THING
After a volcano erupts, an isolated island community is evacuated to an industrial town, in a drama by the Scottish playwright Zinnie Harris. The cast includes Jennifer Dundas, Dan Futterman, Peter Gerety, Robert Hogan, and Jenny Sterlin. Neil Pepe is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

MONSTER
Michael Greif ("Rent") is the director of a new play by Neal Bell, based on Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein." In previews through Jan. 26. Opens Jan. 27 at 7. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

THE RING: THE OPERATIC ERA LABORATORY
Target Margin Theatre presents five new plays examining Wagner's epic opera: "Ring Cycle," by the Rattazzi Brothers; "Siegfried's Nerve," adapted by Lucas Hnath; "Über," by Ethan Hein; "Boca," adapted by Yuri Skujins; and "Valkyrie; or, What Happens When a Good-Natured Goddess Goes Bad," by Aaron Tugendhaft, Susanna Gellert, and Chloe Johnston. Opens Jan. 23 at 7 and continues through Feb. 10. (Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk Street. 358-3657.)

RUNT OF THE LITTER
The former Houston Oiler Bo Eason performs his semiautobiographical one-man show, about a small-town boy who makes it to the N.F.L. In previews. (MCC Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 206-1515.)

SORROWS & REJOICINGS
Judith Light, Charlayne Woodard, John Glover, and Marcy Harriell star in a new play by Athol Fugard, set in post-apartheid South Africa. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BRUTAL IMAGINATION
Cornelius Eady's adaptation of his book of poetry about the notorious Susan Smith case, in which the South Carolinian (played to trailer-trash perfection by Sally Murphy) fabricated a generic black man (the excellent Joe Morton) as the carjacking abductor of her two children—whom in fact she'd murdered by locking them in her Mazda and then rolling it into a river. Rather than a play, the show is a lyrical, somewhat didactic recitation of the story and of the numbing ways that racism allowed the town of Union to band together for more than a week in search of the figment of Smith's imagination. It has many affecting moments, especially when Morton, as the nonexistent Mr. Zero, brings to life a cast of uncomfortably familiar caricatures (Stepin Fetchit, Uncle Tom, Buckwheat, Aunt Jemima, et al.). Still, it would have been more compelling to let Smith and Mr. Zero interact with each other—really hammer out their imagined relationship. That might have been truly brutal. With music by Diedre Murray. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

CARSON MC CULLERS (HISTORICALLY INACCURATE)
The Georgia-born writer's life and work is the subject of a new play by Sarah Schulman, directed by Marion McClinton. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Three actors perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

CYMBELINE
Theatre for a New Audience's staging of Shakespeare's play, directed by Bartlett Sher. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

ECCO PORCO
A persecuted pig is the focus of the latest show from the interdisciplinary troupe Mabou Mines, written by Lee Breuer and starring Ruth Maleczech and Frederick Neumann. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Jan. 27.)

HOBSON'S CHOICE
An Atlantic Theatre Company revival of Harold Brighouse's 1915 play, starring David Aaron Baker, Brian Murray, and Martha Plimpton. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

HOMEBODY/KABUL
Tony Kushner's latest play, set in London and in Kabul in 1998, about a woman who becomes obsessed with Afghanistan. Declan Donnellan is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

MAMMA MIA!
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Andersson and Ulvaeus have shrewdly allowed their platinum hits to be sent up by a story that pits the impudence of youth against the resilience of middle age. Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon that connects the dots between ABBA's No. 1 singles, asks the question: Can twenty-year-old Sophie, the daughter of a hippie dropout who was the leader of a girl group called Donna and the Dynamos, find out which of the three men she's invited to her wedding is her real father? Though the show is cunningly directed by Phyllida Lloyd and given the proper vulgar acrylic touch by the designer Mark Thompson, the question—a multimillion-dollar McGuffin—remains unanswered. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

MARIA DEL BOSCO (SEX & RACING CARS: A SOUND OPERA)
The avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman's fiftieth play. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

MOSTLY SONDHEIM
In her one-woman show, Barbara Cook performs songs by Stephen Sondheim, as well as songs by his favorite composers. Sundays and Mondays at 7:30, through Feb. 11. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

NOISES OFF
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," all the members of the excellent cast—Patti LuPone, Peter Gallagher, Richard Easton, Faith Prince, Edward Hibbert, Katie Finneran, T. R. Knight, Thomas McCarthy, and Robin Weigert—shine in roles that lesser co-

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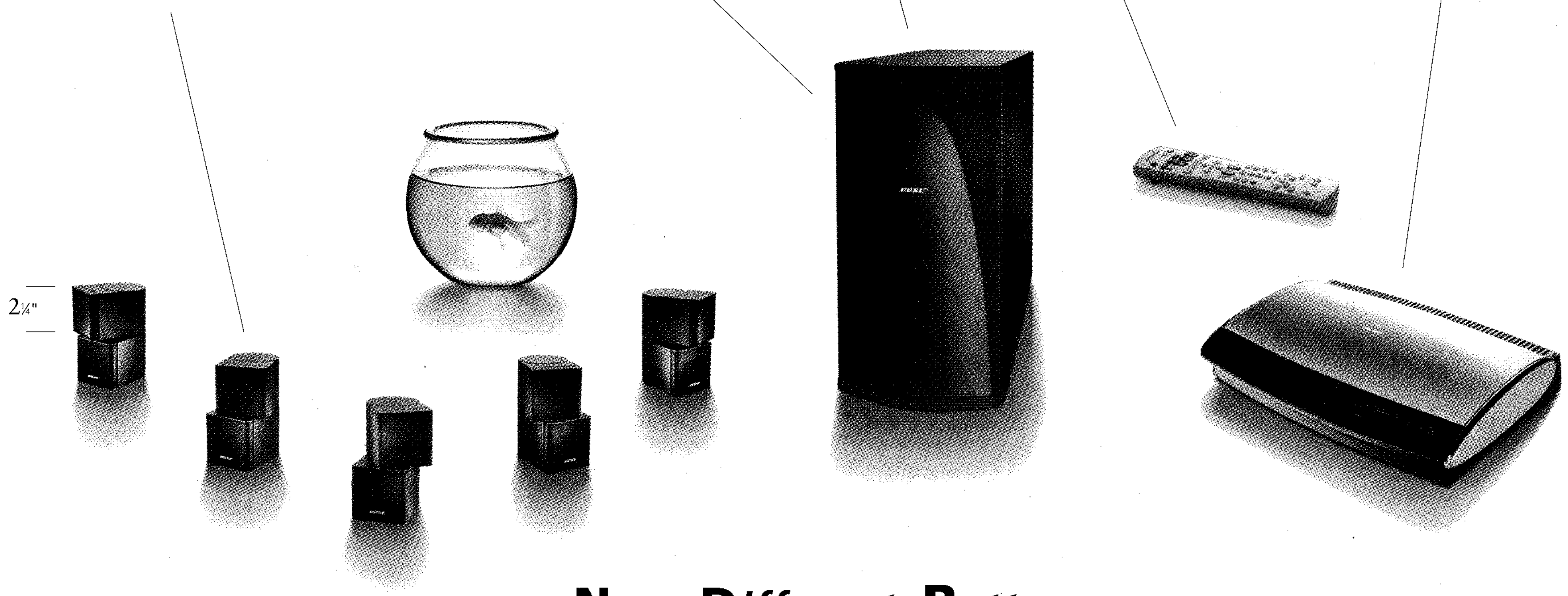

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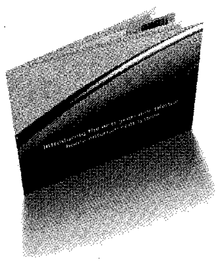

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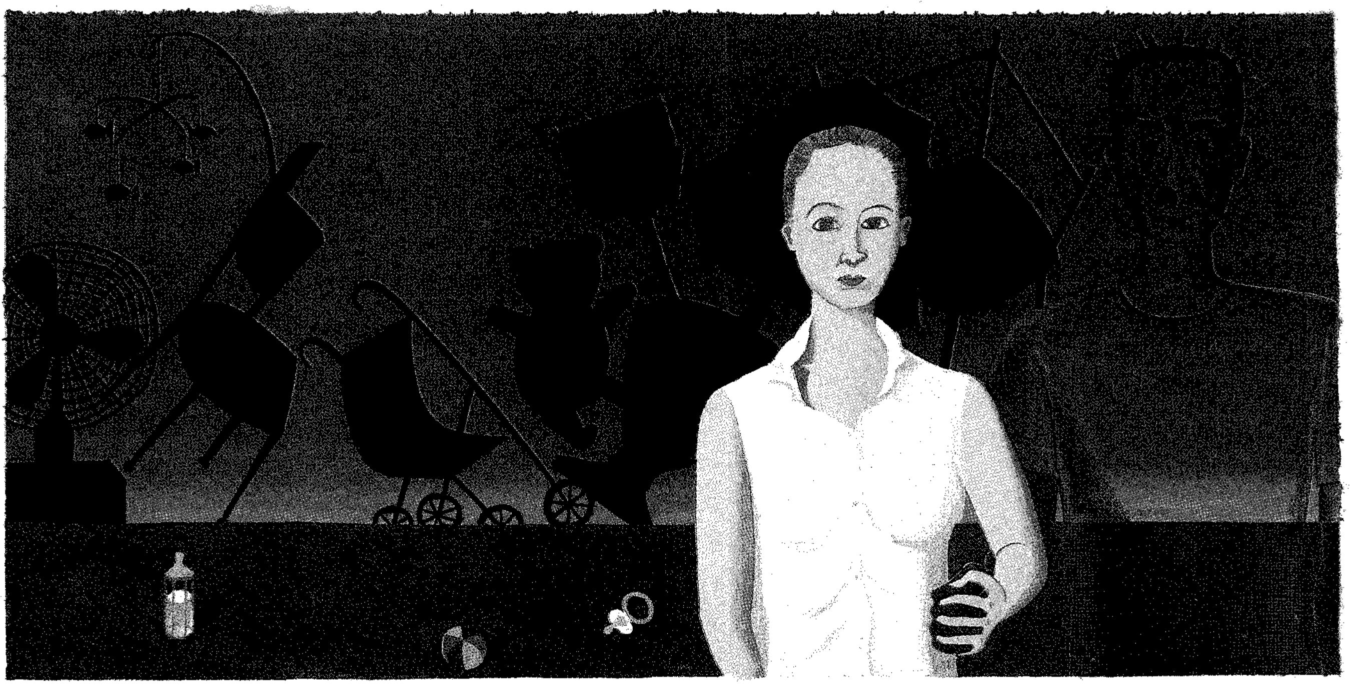
medians would surely find daunting. Frayn's construction requires spot-on comic timing, and with the help of Sams, this production delivers it—and then some. The laughs rumble through the audience from start to finish. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

PERMANENT VISITOR
A two-month festival of plays about or by Dawn Powell, or based on her works. (78th Street Theatre, 236 W. 78th St. 206-1515.)

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
It's one thing for a man to develop the ability to stretch his scrotum until it's the size of a dinner plate, but another to share this talent with the world. These two Australians, Simon Morley and David (Friendy) Friend, profess embarrassment at the success of their "little pub show," but it's still a con: fifteen minutes into their act they are utterly naked and out of ideas. They can't go on, but they do. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

SEXAHOLIX . . . A LOVE STORY
"A little coitus / Never hoit us," John Leguizamo jokes in his third one-man Broadway show, a crowd-pleasing hip-hop account of sexual escapades. Starting with the wacky impoverishment of his Colombian-Puerto Rican childhood and ending with proud parenthood as the father of two "Jewricans," Leguizamo is noisy, funny, inventive, and sweet. He brings new sounds, new moves, and a new audience to the Great White Way. (He even dances in the aisles.) Next time, though, he'd do well to bring new material, too. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



Sally Murphy and Joe Morton, in Cornelius Eady's "Brutal Imagination," at the Vineyard.

KATHY OSBORN

SPEED-HEDDA
The Los Angeles troupe Fabulous Monsters Performance Company brings its all-male adaptation of "Hedda Gabler" to town for a brief engagement. Thursdays through Sundays, through Feb. 3. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

SUMMER OF '42
A musical adaptation of the 1971 movie, which was based on Herman Raucher's coming-of-age novel of the same title. With a book by Hunter Foster and music and lyrics by David Kirshenbaum. Gabriel Barre is the director and choreographer. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

TAPE
Having seen the recent movie adaptation starring the marquee actors Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, and Robert Sean Leonard is no excuse for skipping Stephen Belber's terrific (and here expanded) play about three high-school friends (Dominic Fumusa, Josh Stamberg, and Alison West), who years after graduation find themselves unexpectedly hashing out the aftereffects of a traumatic sexual incident that has haunted each of them in different ways. The director Geoffrey Nauffts has done a great job of staging the play's new version in the tiny José Quintero Theatre; the action spans two decades but is confined to a shabby hotel room in East Lansing, Michigan. Belber has expert fun torturing his characters with the things that never get said, yet the language is uniquely telling and the underlying grief shines through. And this Off Broadway production has one thing in particular that the movie could never claim to have: the funny-sad, love-hate chemistry that endures between two true friends, Fumusa and Stamberg, for whom the play was written; it's something to see. (534 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

TARTUFFE
The Worth Street Theatre Company presents a new version of Molière's comedy, written and directed by Jeff Cohen. The cast includes Gerald Anthony, Crista Moore, and the playwright Keith Reddin. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 206-1515.)

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
This one-man show, written by Glen Berger and performed by David Chandler, manages to be both a funny tale of a Dutch librarian's midlife crisis and a serious, intriguing look at the value of any one life. After a book is returned to the library a hundred and thirteen years overdue, the librarian becomes obsessed with finding out how and why. He eventually comes to believe that the Wandering Jew was the errant borrower, whose late return of the volume is one of a series of clues he's left in a desperate attempt to document his existence. As billed, it's "An Impressive Presentation of Lovely Evidences." Directed by Randy White. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

URINETOWN
The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon (not only does a sign saying "Secret Hideout" hang above a secret hideout; the sign has an arrow on it). (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.
THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

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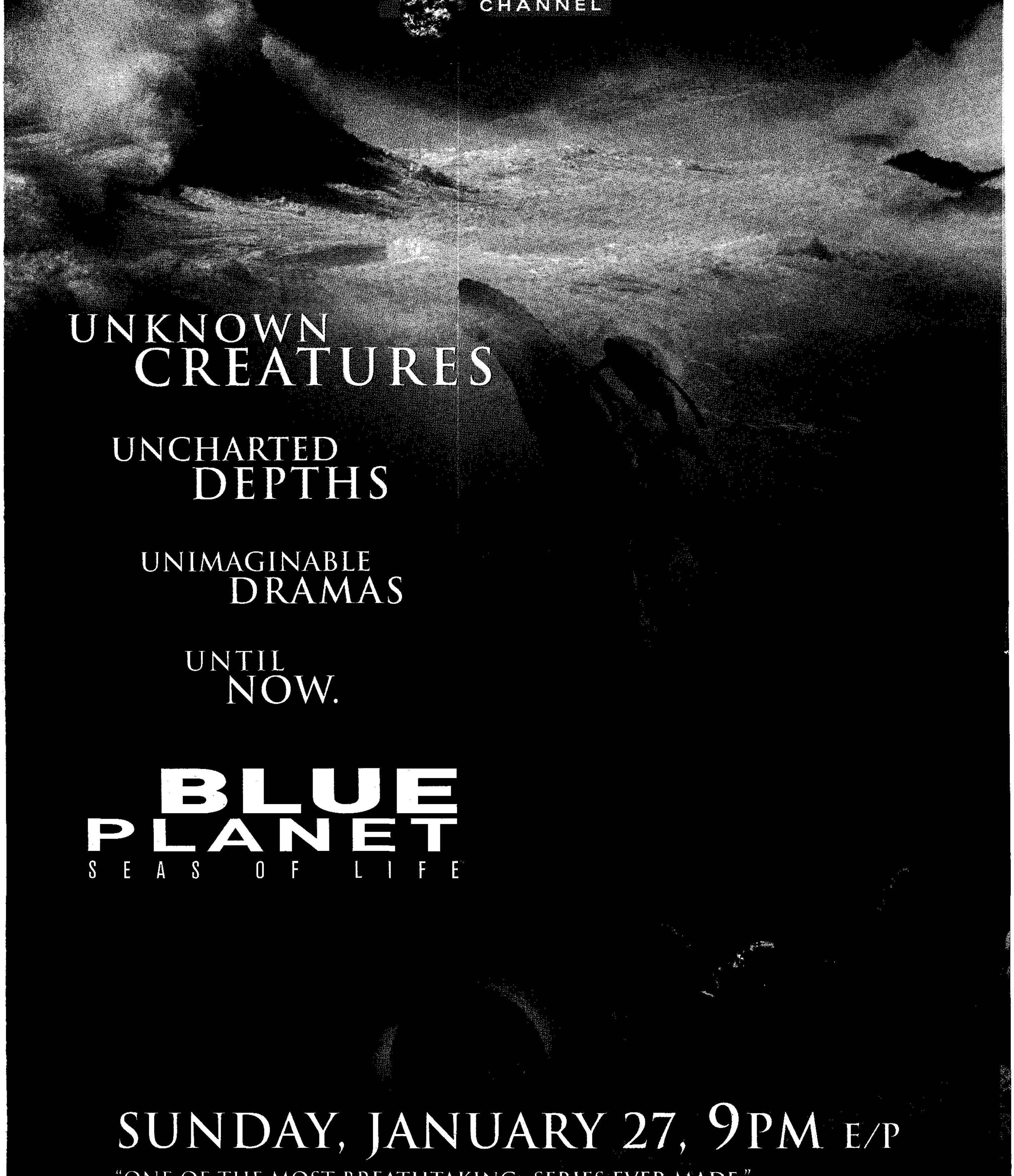

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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Jan. 23 at 8: "Tributary," the divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," and "Jeu de Cartes." ♦ Jan. 24 at 8: "Dances at a Gathering," "Viva Verdi," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ Jan. 25 at 8: "Tributary," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ Jan. 26 at 2: "Jeu de Cartes," "Romeo and Juliet," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: The divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Hallelujah Junction," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ Jan. 27 at 3: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Soirée," and "Symphony in C." ♦ Jan. 29 at 7:30: "Allegro Brillante," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," "Viva Verdi," and "Tributary." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Through Feb. 24.)

NEW YORK FLAMENCO FESTIVAL
Jan. 25 at 8: Gala de Andalucía, a benefit concert for the World Music Institute, features Spanish dancers from several generations: El Güito, Manuela Carrasco, Israel Galván, and María Pagés. ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: Ballet Flamenco Antonio Canales. ♦ Jan. 27 at 7: Eva Yerbabuena, who is thirty-one years old, keeps strictly to the flamenco tradition in the carriage of her upper back—rigid and arched—and in the delicate precision of her footwork, but she takes liberties with her belly, which undulates in rhythmic counterpoint to her snakelike arms. She appears with her fifteen-member troupe of singers, guitarists, flutists, drummers, and dancers. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

"NEST"
Christopher House, the artistic director of the Toronto Dance Theatre, used to restrict his dances to movement. "Then I started to get a bit bored," he says. For "Nest," performed by himself and his twelve plush and elastic dancers, he has added voice-over commentary, calligraphy applied to the body, and facsimiles of the multiples of the mystico-conceptualist Joseph Beuys. ("This suit is unbelievably itchy," says House, dressed in felt. "To be honest, I think I'm allergic.") House comes close to creating a slipshod rummage sale of a dance with his new choreographic method ("I just keep going down these hallways and opening doors," he explains.) But whenever the hour-long work starts to feel too random, passages of silky movement intervene to bring the bits together—like nesting dolls. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 22-25 at 8, Jan. 26 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 27 at 2 and 7:30.)

"HALLELUJAH"
The Liz Lerman Dance Exchange presents "In Praise of Fertile Fields," the result of its yearlong collaborations with both the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and gardeners from the Berkshires. Lerman also performs her solo "Uneasy Dances," an excerpt from her work "50 Modest Reflections on Turning 50." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 24-26 at 8:30 and Jan. 27 at 7:30.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

LOSER'S LOUNGE
The keyboardist and cultural archeologist **Joe McGinty** and his band of merry pranksters turn the spotlight on the music of the Beach Boys. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Jan. 24 at 8 and Jan. 25-26 at 9.)

"AS OF NOW"
Two pianists, **Randy Weston** and **Danilo Perez,** bring newly commissioned work to this ambitious "Jazz at Lincoln Center" series. Weston has been exploring the African linkage with jazz since the fifties; Perez, a newer figure on the jazz scene, draws on the rhythms and timbres of his Panamanian heritage. **Regina Carter,** the extravagantly gifted violinist, is Weston's featured soloist. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Jan. 25-26 at 8.)

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
Lincoln Center presents three nights of standards. Jan. 25 at 8: The veteran singer **Margaret Whiting** reminisces about the days, in the late forties, when she was at the top of the charts with such songs as "Now Is the Hour," "A Tree in the Meadow," and "Far Away Places." The understated, wryly hip vocalist **Mary Cleere Haran** lends a hand. Jan. 26 at 8 and 10: **Eric Comstock,** with the help of **Paula West,** sings the works of Burton Lane, the composer of such Broadway fare as "Finian's Rainbow" and "On a Clear Day, You Can See Forever." Jan. 27 at 5: **Rob Kapilow,** the maniacally enthusiastic host of the classical-music radio show "What Makes It Great," and the silver-throated vocalist **Ann Hampton Callaway** explore the works of Rodgers and Hart, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, and others. (Kaplan Penthouse. 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500.)

"DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN"
Alison Krauss, Emmylou Harris, Ralph Stanley, and many others perform music from one of the best-selling country-music albums of last year, the soundtrack from the film "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Jan. 29 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Jan. 25: **Suzzy and Maggie Roche,** of the legendary folk trio the Roches, celebrate their new release, "Zero Church." A collection of prayers set to music, the album is replete with dark-tinged chord progressions and harmonies.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Jan. 23: The blues-harmonica master **James Cotton** keeps it real at this Times Square nightspot. Jan. 25: Perhaps it was the truly dubious hair styles back in the seventies, perhaps it was just fate, but Long Island's once mighty **Blue Öyster Cult** never bridged the gap between their own brand of brainy demi-metal and the punk rock they grew up alongside (punk matriarch Patti Smith was a B.Ö.C. pal, and one of their managers produced the second album by the Clash). Unfortunately, that sort of credibility was not in the cards for the boys, although they did manage to contribute a classic-rock radio staple, the morbid air-guitar standard "(Don't Fear) the Reaper." Jan. 26: Fifty years after he helped create what's widely regarded as the first rock-and-roll record, Jackie Brenston's "Rocket 88," **Ike Turner** is out on tour again, supporting his latest album, "Here and Now." Though his name may forever be associated with spousal abuse (thanks to Tina's autobiography), Turner is still capable of producing spectacular rhythm and blues that is full of the early spirit of rock and roll. Jan. 27: Another living piece of rock-and-roll history, **Johnnie Johnson** played piano in Chuck Berry's band for nearly thirty years and along the way inspired him to write "Johnnie B. Goode."

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 23: Having initially made his name with jazzy keyboard noodlings behind Jim Morrison's dark verses in the Doors, **Ray Manzarek** brings his signature sound to town in the company of another poet, the bohemian veteran **Jim Carroll.** Jan. 25: **Dave Edmunds.** Since launching his career with the 1970 single "I Hear You Knocking," this singer/songwriter/guitarist/producer has enjoyed an eclectic career, forming the way-cool (if short-lived) band Rockpile with Nick Lowe in the late seventies and later working with artists ranging from the Stray Cats to Ringo Starr. Edmunds, only recently recovered from heart surgery, is taking his fingerpicking guitar work, rockabilly voice, and transistor-radio charm on the road for a rare solo tour. Jan. 28: The Western swing of **Asleep at the Wheel.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Jan. 22-24: **Willie Nelson.** The grizzled highwayman hits the road with songs from his umpteenth release, "The Great Divide," a heavily produced affair which finds him in the company of such upstarts as Kid Rock, Lee Ann Womack, and Bonnie Raitt. None of his new friends will join him here, but Nelson, a hell-raising performer from a lost age, will do just fine without them. Jan. 25-26: The hot and spicy funk of New Orleans's **Galactic,** which is fronted by the charismatic vocalist Theryl (the Houseman) de Clouet. Jan. 29: Having outlasted the Stone Roses, the Happy Mondays, and other late-eighties Manchester brethren, the **Charlatans UK** released their seventh album, "Wonderland," last year. With **Starsailor.** Taking its inspiration from the anguished rocker Tim Buckley (the name comes from a 1970 album of Buckley's), this foursome from northwestern England was one of the most talked-about bands in the United Kingdom last year, thanks to James Walsh's hollow-in-the-stomach vocals and a Travis-meets-Coldplay sense of melody.

ANNABEL WRIGHT

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Jan. 25-26: The fierce singer **Toshi Reagon** does celebratory shows of retro-funk, urban blues, and folk, all sung with evangelical fervor.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—Jan. 24: The Washington a-cappella group **DaVinci's Notebook** and **Robbie Schaefer**, one quarter of the Virginia outfit Eddie from Ohio.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 24: Toronto's **Sadies** stop by with their signature blend of psychedelic surf guitar and country music. It's a blistering sound, and if you ever hear it coming out of your radio while it's tuned to a major commercial station you'd better check what's in your coffee.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Jan. 25: An evening of Creole-flavored dance music with **Terrance Simien & the Mallet Playboys.**

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—Jan. 24-25: **Le Tigre**, the former Bikini Kill front woman Kathleen Hanna's current place of employment. The riot-grrrl themes of Hanna's punk past are still intact, but with new musical colorings; Hanna's three-piece outfit mixes sampled drumbeats with early B-52's-style fuzz-box guitar riffs and classic sixties organ and synthesizer sounds. The band is on tour supporting its latest release, "Feminist Sweepstakes."

TABLES FOR TWO

AKA CAFÉ
49 Clinton St. (979-6096)—This spinoff of the pioneering Lower East Side oasis 71 Clinton Fresh Food seems to be having an identity crisis, albeit an appetizing one. In a former dress shop—whose display windows now hold high-style seating complete with snake plants and Lucite chairs—aKa serves the kind of snacks you'd expect to discover at a street cart (and features Latin and Jewish ingredients from the neighborhood's old days), but with an arty twist.

Although it's been more than two years since 71 launched the culinary gentrification of this corner of the city, it still must be startling for the neighborhood's old-timers to witness the steady flow of sharply dressed uptowners who stop here for a bite before beginning their downtown bar crawls. It's a pit-stop kind of place. Each dish makes one succinct point, and while that strategy works at 71, here the menu is like a list of gastronomic one-liners that don't quite add up to a full meal. Also, some of the dishes seem a little nuts. Matzo bread is served with a decidedly unkosher, bacon-heavy oyster soup. A Cuban-style pressed steak-and-pickle sandwich comes on half a bialy. The craziest stunt may be the lamb-tongue sandwich with almond butter and red-currant jelly. Luckily, they all taste good. And a recently added section of the menu, "bigger hot plates" (skate cakes, braised pork loin and shoulder) tries to address the portion problem. The most tapas-like item, a dish of hard-boiled egg with chorizo and tomato paste, is a surprising pleasure because it's so simple. The empanadas are tamper-proof despite their rambunctious-sounding chutneys and relishes: braised pork with pickled collards is especially satisfying. There's a brief but well-picked wine list with enough available by the glass to suit the grazing strategy of eating that the place invites. For dessert there are more empanadas (chocolate ones) and dulce-de-leche pudding. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, Saturdays for dinner only. Entrées $6-$12.)

—*Owen Phillips*

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ARCI'S PLACE
450 Park Ave. S., at 30th St. (532-4370)—Through Jan. 26: From the "Dukes of Hazzard" to "Annie Get Your Gun" to high-profile cabaret shows, it's been quite the long, strange trip for **Tom Wopat.** The question is, can he scale down his Broadway-sized charm to the confines of an intimate club?

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Thanks to some younger fans who adore his Blue Note masterpieces from the nineteen-sixties, the tenaciously individualistic pianist and composer **Andrew Hill** is making something of a comeback. With him Jan. 24-26 are such sharp players as the saxophonists **Marty Ehrlich** and **Greg Tardy** and the trumpeter **Ron Horton.** They are the vibrant improvisers who helped make Hill's 2000 release, "Dusk," a rejuvenating joy. Eleven additional horns will join the sextet for new Hill compositions that will be recorded for a forthcoming album. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Jan. 27: Vocalese, the practice of putting lyrics to the melodies of recorded improvised instrumental solos, is an acquired taste—it's tongue-twisting gibberish to some, high art to others. The dapper **Jon Hendricks** and the elegant **Annie Ross** are just about the best practitioners of the technique, having put it on the map with their late trio, Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross, and they're keeping the tradition alive in high style. With the **New York Voices.**

DANNY'S
346 W. 46th St. (265-8133)—Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays: **Blossom Dearie**, she of the porcelain voice and huge interpretive skills, has been knocking them dead here for nine months in her own quietly effective way. This treasured veteran knows her way around standards both shopworn and contemporary, enlivening everything she touches with just the right blend of pathos, wit, and stiletto-sharp swing.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Feb. 2: There's little that **Cleo Laine** can't enhance with her mellifluous phrasing and notable range; here she flits from American popular song to the blues to Shakespeare adaptations. Laine's husband and longtime performance partner, the saxophonist **John Dankworth**, leads her backing ensemble.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 27: The iconic guitarist **Pat Martino** has come full circle these days, touring in organ-based combos like the ones with which he began his career in the early sixties. Only now he's got decades of experienced playing available to incorporate into the mix. Still, he never rests on his laurels, and risk permeates the best of his fluid improvisations. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (242-1063)—Jan. 25: The brash yet graceful stylist **Brian Lynch** has brought vigor to Phil Woods's bebopping quintet as well as a slew of Latin ensembles around the city; his slashing trumpet will have little trouble cutting through the thick textures of his newly convened big band. Jan. 26: The bassist **Lonnie Plaxico** has been keeping bandstands swinging for years now, but his highest visibility may have been achieved during his recent leadership of singer Cassandra Wilson's backing ensemble. Like Wilson, Plaxico tries to avoid the tried and true; his own quintet should reflect his adventurous leanings.

LE MADELEINE
403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Jan. 27-28: The guitarist **Bucky Pizzarelli** sits in for Gene Bertoncini. Pizzarelli, to use an Irving Berlin compliment, "just reeks with class." This consummate crafts-

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BOOK CURRENTS

Pigskin on the Page

As a sophomore wingback on Columbia's football team in 1941, Jack Kerouac was criticized for being slow to learn the team's trademark trick play, the KF-79. According to Mark F. Bernstein's history of the early game, **FOOTBALL: THE IVY LEAGUE ORIGINS OF AN AMERICAN OBSESSION** (Pennsylvania), Kerouac eventually quit, disdainful of the razzle-dazzle: "As if I'd joined football for 'deception,' for God's sake," he later said. Bernstein chronicles the negotiations among the Ivies as they hammered out a standard set of rules in the eighteen-seventies. "There can be no excuse for the use of teeth in football," wrote an observer in the Harvard *Advocate* in 1881.

In more than two decades of service in the National Football League, the referee Jerry Markbreit learned that the officials should act like field generals. "Having control of your whistle," he writes in **LAST CALL**, a memoir written with Alan Steinberg (Sports Publishing), "is a real art." But even Markbreit recognizes that violence is part of the game. Michael Oriard's **KING FOOTBALL** (North Carolina), an account of the sport from 1920 to 1960, notes that "ordered rage" was a guard against being "physically deficient" as a nation. War and football have always been closely linked in the national psyche; Oriard reminds us that some of the most ardent football boosters were also hawkish politicians, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge. He even quotes from "The Soft American," a 1960 *Sports Illustrated* essay written by John F. Kennedy in which the touch-football enthusiast urged his fellow-citizens to get in shape to meet the challenge posed by the Soviet Union. Oriard goes on: "Modern life was *soft*, in short, football was *hard*."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

man can seduce with velvety chords or rumble through a swing chorus with barrelling assurance.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—Jan. 25-26: The **Eric Alexander** quartet. With a few solid albums under his own name, and myriad appearances as a sideman, the tenor saxophonist has made a name for himself as a satisfying, no-nonsense hard bopper.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Jan. 24-25: The trumpeter and composer **Dave Douglas's** latest band is a politically motivated project that he put together in reaction to arms dealing during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. By calling on members of the many bands that he currently leads, Douglas has stocked Witness with a string section, electronic drums, and a disk jockey, along with traditional jazz horns and rhythm section.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Jan. 27: **Don Byron**, the virtuoso clarinettist, may flit from style to style within the course of any given year, but he's not fooling around. His Music for Six Musicians band delves into the Latin jazz that Byron has played since he was a teenager; it's stocked with experienced players committed to both rhythmic pleasure and to the leader's ambitions. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Splendid Isolation: Art of Easter Island"** sparks wonderment about the speck in the South Pacific whose remarkable civilization rose and fell during the thousand years before the first white man made landfall, on Easter Sunday in 1722. Only a few works in the show—including a smallish example (weighing twelve hundred pounds) of the great stone heads—predate that fateful event; the rest are mostly nineteenth-century wooden objects from a final efflorescence of native genius. The art has a familiar Polynesian look, but it is haunted by the memories of a dying race whose past included disastrous civil wars and the astonishing cult of the Birdman: each year, the island's leader was selected on the basis of a perilous quest for an egg of the sooty tern. Wooden tablets display Easter Island's unique written language, which remains undecipherable to this day. Through Aug. 4. ♦ **"Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed"** traces ideals of beauty from head to toe (with notable detours at the neck, bust, and waist) and the gloriously absurd fashions that ensue in their pursuit. Curator Harold Koda contrasts recent examples of haute couture with artifacts from other cultures and historic periods, so a Comme des Garçons organza ruff about as large as an end table shares the stage with an elaborately beaded Masai collar. Through March 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The artist Ricci Albenda converts the lower level of the museum into three corridors, toying with perspective and playing spatial games in the gray area between architecture and sculpture. The first, a trompe-l'oeil mural of a corridor, greets viewers as they ride down the escalator. Around the corner, viewers find an actual corridor, the mirror image of the hallway depicted in the mural. A little further on, Albenda presents a shallow relief of the same image. This through-the-looking-glass installation recalls both the solemn James Turrell (of the crater in the desert) and the playful Viktor Vasarely (of the cubic illusions). Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—For **"Brazil: Body & Soul,"** the Thomas Krens team has gone to new extremes, utterly transforming the museum and leaving one awed by the mega-exhibition's scope, design, audacity, and cost. The rotunda is now a Stygian theatre, with a massive baroque altarpiece in its center. From there, viewers ascend past ranks of polychromed Madonnas, carved lions, ex-votos, and tribal videos and arrive, finally, at a celestial ring of white rooms, where the baroque (which lasted nearly three centuries in Brazil) abruptly gives way to modernism. Through Jan. 27. ♦ **"Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People."** Through March 3. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Paul Pfeiffer ends his yearlong stint as the museum's artist-in-residence with a pair of new digital projects. The stronger of the two is a staccato loop depicting a melee on the basketball court after the Chicago Bulls' championship victory in 1996. The fluster of black hands frantically stroking a white-clad back looks simultaneously like an orgy and a mugging. The loop runs on the diminutive screen of a video camera, installed on a pedestal inside a glass vitrine. Though no doubt intended to underscore the fetishism of technology, it dilutes the impact of the image itself. Through Feb. 24. ♦ **"Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence."** Through Feb. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum,"** a modest blockbuster culled from the collections of the British Museum, opens with a group of rare wooden statuettes from the Old Kingdom. One of them still has a painted guideline running down the center of her torso. Equally fascinating is a drawing board, more than three thousand years old, with a mix of finished and practice motifs: a serene Pharaoh, a quail chick, and seven crude efforts at hands. But the show also offers plenty of moments of Ozymandian grandeur, among them a reclining lion in red granite (looking a good deal more formidable than his Fifth Avenue cousins) and a vast and trunkless head of Amenhotep III. Through Feb. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave. at 70th St. (288-6400)—Both Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander work in the vernacular of Indian miniature painting. Sheikh, an established artist in her native India, turned to miniatures mid-career in the seventies, tackling political subjects such as the practice of "dowry death," or bride burning (depictions of which are included here). Her loose, sweeping strokes are more indebted to her training in a modernist, Western style than to the conventional miniaturist's arsenal of single-haired brushes. Sikander was formally trained at an art school in Pakistan in the nineties before emigrating to the United States, and her work couples the impossible precision of the Mughal masters with a subversive whimsy (witness her mandala made of cowboy boots). Through Feb. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

GROLIER CLUB
47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—Jorge Luis Borges once wrote, "I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library," and it seems fitting that this show of Borgesian ephemera is installed at the Grolier Club, a bibliophile's heaven. **"Borges: The Time Machine"** is organized in five "chapters," and it includes the expected manuscripts and correspondence (including an achingly romantic postcard to paramour Estela Canto) as well as more winsome material, like the author's childhood drawing of a tiger. Borges once declared himself "an Argentinian superstition," and the show (organized in Buenos Aires) thoroughly catalogues the anti-Borges sentiment of the Peronist regime (the dictator once demoted the author from library cataloguer to poultry inspector, a position he resigned immediately). Through Feb. 9. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

DAHESH MUSEUM
601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—In its new role as an underdog tradition, academic art continues to offer a beguiling mix of skill, melodrama, and benighted political subject matter. Several of the pictures in the second installment of **"Telling Tales"** are un-

ERIC HANSON

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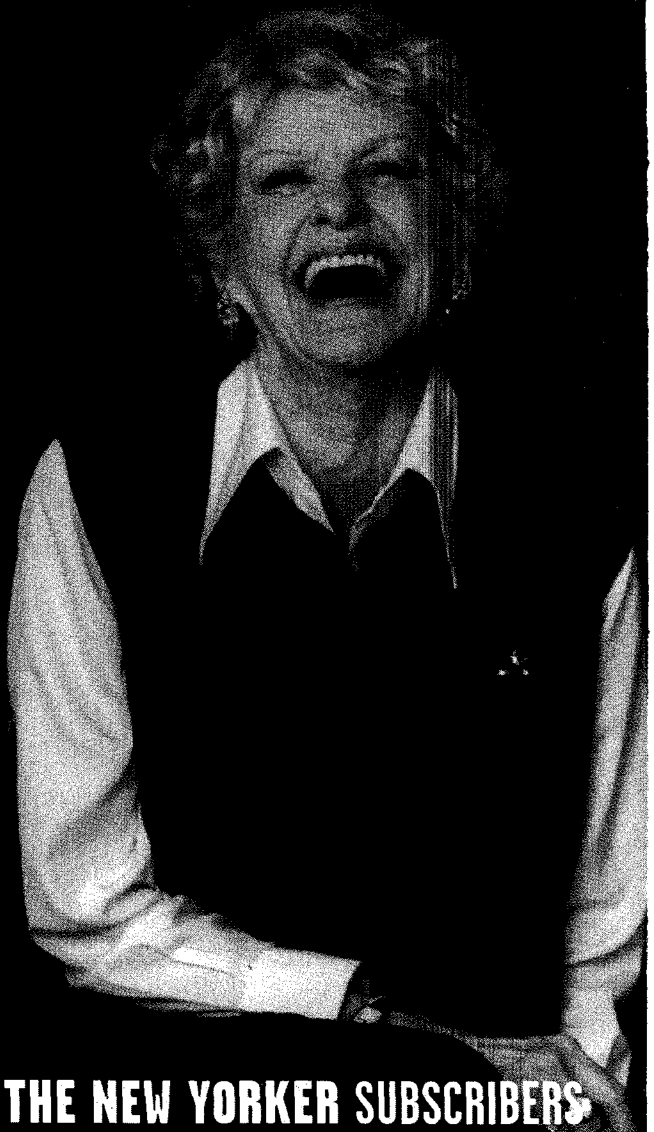

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forgettable, and not only because they include such magnificently painted wings, scabbards, and nipples. The most lurid canvas, Čermák's "The Abduction of a Herzegovenian Woman," is a grotesquely titillating example of pictorial hate speech, with truly creepy contemporary resonances. If you prefer satire to propaganda, Vibert's tableau of smug, tea-sipping cardinals offers an unusual hybrid: anti-clerical Photo-Realism. Through Jan. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

DAN GRAHAM
On the heels of the Whitney's excellent "Into the Light" exhibition on film and video installations, the gallery revives five of Graham's rarely seen film projections from 1969 to 1973. Four of them are double projections that explore the relationship between the body and the camera. In "Roll," one wall shows a performer rolling along the ground while filming, the other shows the footage the rolling man took of the stationary camera. In "Sunrise to Sunset," the camera arcs across a midday sky from the position of sunrise to that of sunset. The films have a refreshingly earnest, lo-fi quality for viewers used to the high production values of artists like Matthew Barney and Chris Aitken. Unfortunately, the distracting racket of the old-fashioned projectors (ten in all) sounds like the helicopter scene in "Apocalypse Now." Through Feb. 9. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

JACOB LAWRENCE / REGINALD MARSH
This sampling, an overture to the Lawrence retrospective that closes next week at the Whitney, ranges from the sombre Harlem pool-hall scenes of the thirties to the passionate red-and-blue harmonies of the "Builders" series, on which Lawrence was still working just before he died. A smaller selection of Marsh's drawings spotlights his breezy high spirits. The same wind that lifts the skirts of the leggy lovelies in one drawing musses the hair of the garrulous drunks in another. If Lawrence was a poet of coöperation, Marsh was a happy satirist of leisure. Through Jan. 26. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

TREVOR WINKFIELD / TOM BURCKHARDT
An outstanding pairing of two of today's most beguiling eccentrics. Winkfield's hard-edged compositions have a coded, rebuslike specificity—they're befuddling, but unfailingly precise and generous, offering a universe of nutty, resonant imaginings. A Gypsy juggles ice-cream cones filled with postcards. A flock of doves arrives, holding paper fans in their beaks. A poet takes dictation from a beautiful mallard duck. Burckhardt's "Totems" are more casual, digitally printed and then painted in watercolor on pages from old paperbacks. The results are like a one-man game of exquisite corpse, serenely disciplined, polyglot, and playful. Through Feb. 9. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

Short List

CHARLES BURCHFIELD
Kennedy, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 541-9600. Through Jan. 26.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

KRISTEN OPPENHEIM
Oppenheim gives Ozzy Osbourne a run for his money, converting Black Sabbath's eponymous ballad into a sound installation complete with flashing strobe lights and thunderclaps. This isn't the first time Oppenheim has rifled through pop-music lyric sheets; Brian Wilson, Jimi Hendrix, and Lesley Gore have all provided source material in the past. But the visual riff on rock-and-roll spectacle is too literal here, and it undercuts the mesmerizing aural power that is the heart of the piece. Through Feb. 2. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

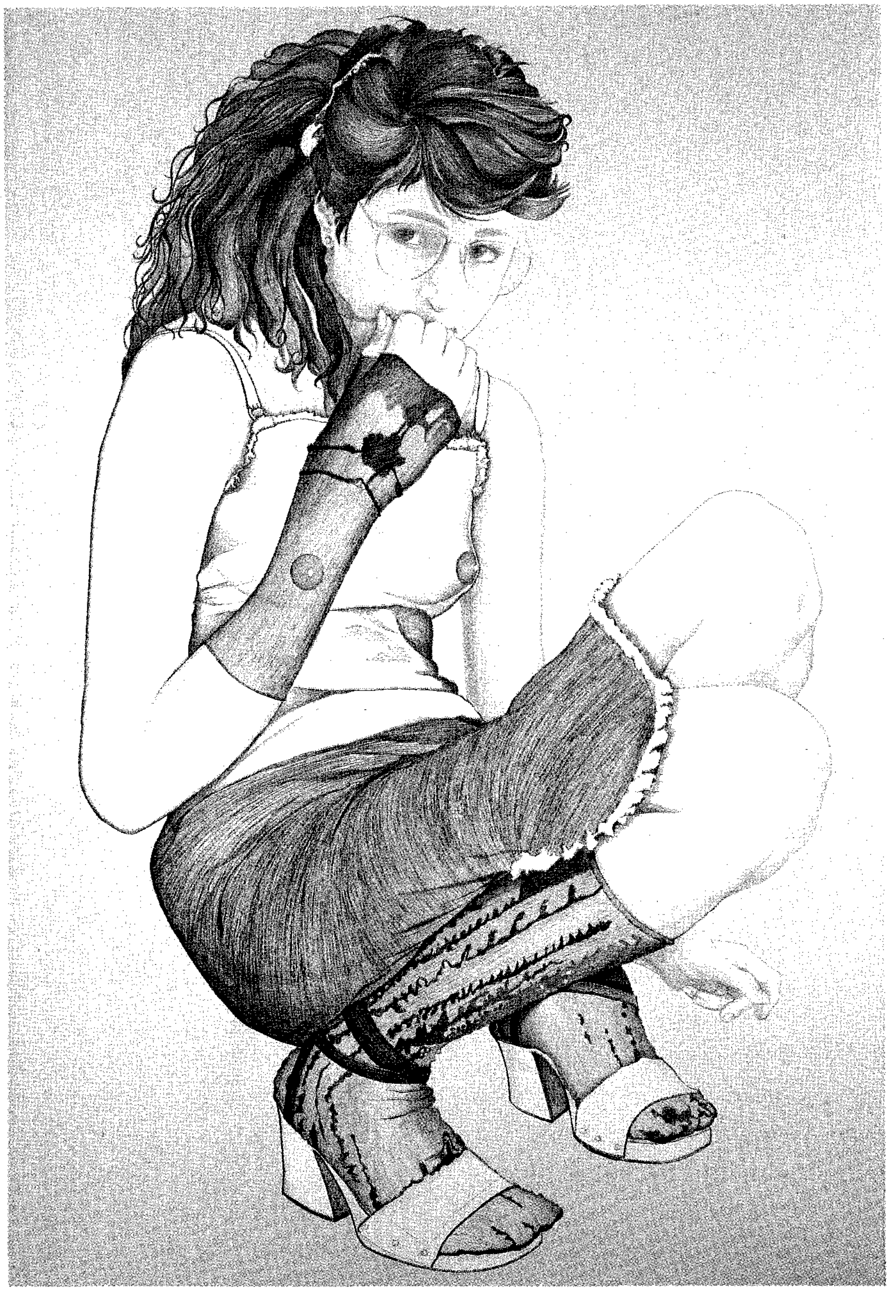
CLARA WILLIAMS
Williams's wintry installation consists of artificial snowdrifts, evergreen saplings, and taxidermied animals (a weasel, a raccoon), and a sculpture of a West Highland terrier. On the walls are a few sluggish landscapes, most of them based on a nineteenth-century historical panorama called "The French Army Entering Switzerland." It's all pretty mysterious, and the title, "Something Like This," half-confirms one's suspicion that Williams's ideas are dotty or vague. Yet her mock-diorama leaves a weirdly lasting impression, both melancholy and sly. Through Feb. 9. (Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 243-3335.)

Short List

CAROL RHODES / AMY SILLMAN
Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262. Through Feb. 2.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

GORDON MATTA-CLARK
In 1973, an Italian curator procured a small house for the artist in Genoa and invited him over. Upon his arrival, Matta-Clark (1943-78) set to work sawing off the peak of the place's pyramid roof, removing that lid with a crane, and sawing rough horizon lines into the interior walls, allowing the rooms to be lit by his



TEEN BEAT *Marlene McCarty's light-filled pen-and-pencil drawings of adolescent girls with bad perms, tight jeans, and mules have inaugurated their own genre: sunny noir. We've seen the girls before, hanging around gas stations, bored with small-town life; they liven things up by committing, or attracting, violence. The drawings, at American Fine Arts and Keenan galleries, come with true-crime accounts (the minor above, Karin Aparo, was acquitted of all charges associated with the 1987 murder of her mother) written like B-movie voice-overs: tawdry, laconic, sexy, and sad.*—*Hilton Als*

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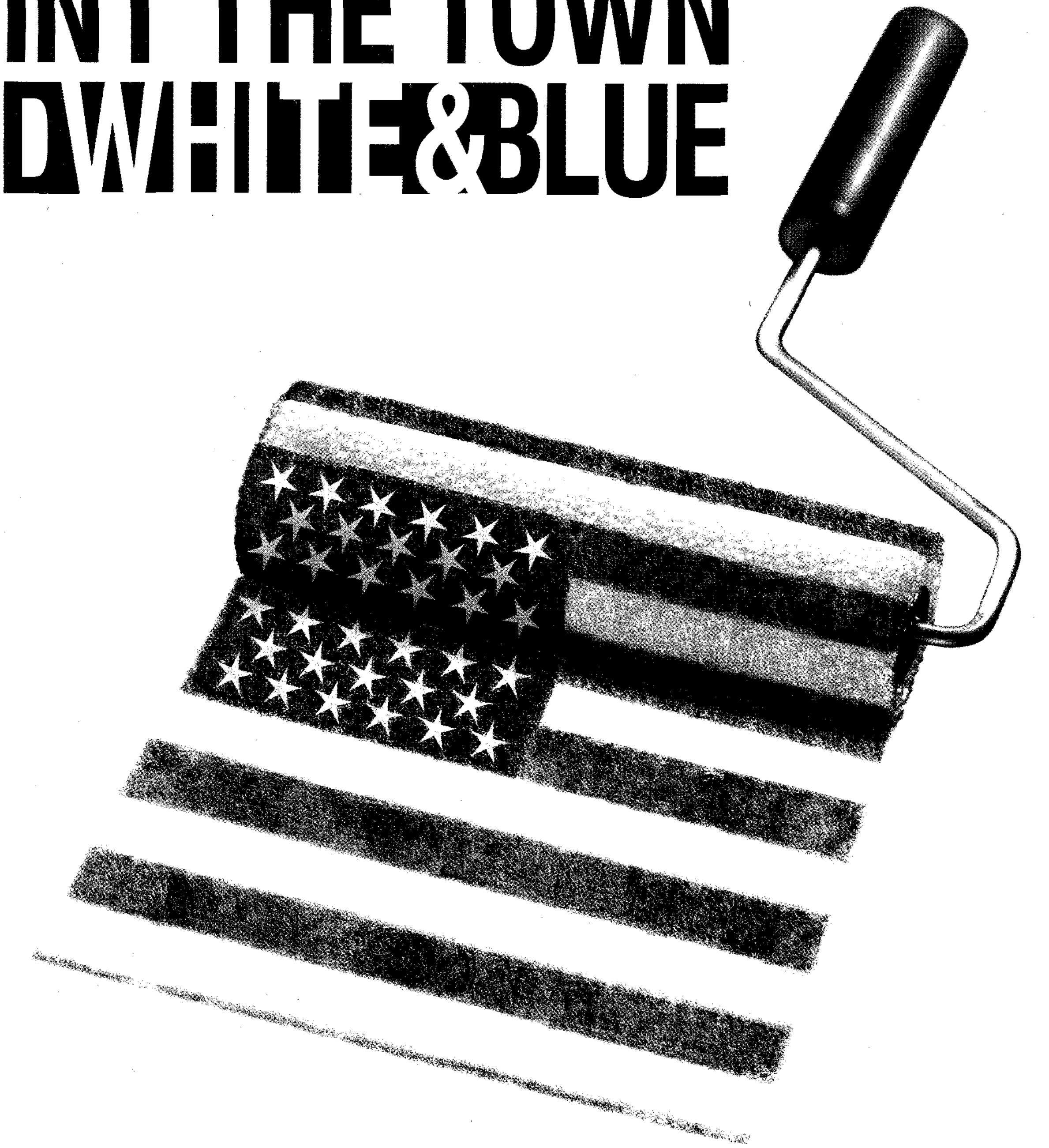

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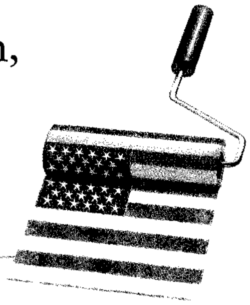
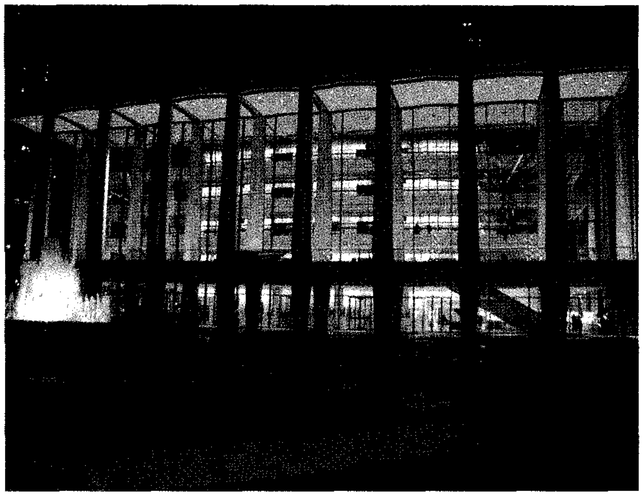


When was the last time you reveled in New York? For many there has never been a better time to feast on the Big Apple. "I've never been more in awe of this incredible city," says Tim Zagat, Chairman of NYC & Company, New York's convention and visitors bureau.

"The resiliency of this city is apparent everywhere you look," agrees Cristyne L. Nicholas, President and CEO of NYC & Company. "The lights of Broadway are bright, our world-famous museums and stores are open, and our spectacular cultural season is in full swing."

Orchestrated by NYC & Company, "Paint the Town Red White & Blue" is making a tempting offer to visitors and residents alike: Come see and do everything you love about the city—at once-in-a-lifetime discounted prices. Major sponsors, including American Express and Delta Airlines, are working to make the program a success. Delta, for example, has awarded ten thousand free tickets to its customers.

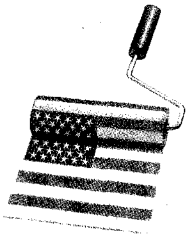
BY SUSAN BRESLOW SARDONE



GET WITH THE PROGRAM

With a **Paint the Town Red White & Blue** savings card (available at no charge through NYC & Company), tourists and New Yorkers alike can take advantage of discounts and special offers at more than 350 participating hotels (e.g., the Marriott Marquis, The Muse, and the Plaza Athénée); restaurants; Broadway theatres; stores; museums; and other venues when they use an American Express Card. Savings are in effect through March 31st.

For those who haven't seen "Cabaret," "Chicago," "Disney's Beauty and the Beast," "Phantom of the Opera," "Rent," and other Broadway hits, this is the time to do so with discounts available for each of the shows. Like to laugh? Several of the city's comedy clubs are offering two-for-one admissions.



> "This place is the best place in the universe…and it's on sale."
>
> –*Paul Shaffer*

Eateries in every corner of the city—from the '21' Club to the Café des Artistes—are offering twenty per cent off lunch and dinner. Even Krispy Kreme is giving away a dozen original glazed doughnuts free with every dozen purchased.

Weekdays from January 28th through February 1st, and February 4th through 8th, there's another reason for gourmands to lift a fork: New York will host **Winter Restaurant Week**. Epicureans will have a chance to dine at more than a hundred and fifty great restaurants. Specially priced lunches will be available for $20.02; prix fixe dinners will cost $30.02.

To lure shoppers this season, many of New York's favorite stores are offering great incentives. Bloomingdale's will provide customers with a fifteen per cent savings certificate and a signature gift if presented with a "same-day" receipt for fifty dollars or more. Tourneau disburses hundred-dollar gift certificates with every $375 purchase. And downtown's J&R Music and Computer World presents a gift with any purchase of twenty-five dollars or more.

"I encourage New Yorkers to be tourists in their own town," says Nicholas. "Take advantage of all the things that inspired you to live here in the first place."

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Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani has said, "There is a real desire on the part of many people all over the world to be part of New York City now." To make that possible, through March 31st, low-cost one, two, and four-night **NYC Freedom Travel Packages**, starting at $157 per person per night, are available through travel agents or online at **www.nycvisit.com**. The packages include a ticket to a Broadway show, dinner, overnight accommodations, discounted parking, and a donation to the Twin Towers Fund for families of 9-11 victims.

"It's the bargain of a lifetime," notes Nicholas. "And from a patriotic perspective, visitors will be supporting the cultural capital of the world and taking a stand against terrorism."

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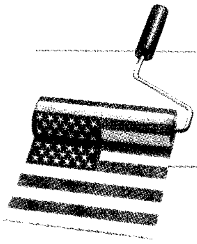

> "I've never been more in awe of this incredible city."
>
> —*Tim Zagat, Chairman, NYC & Company*

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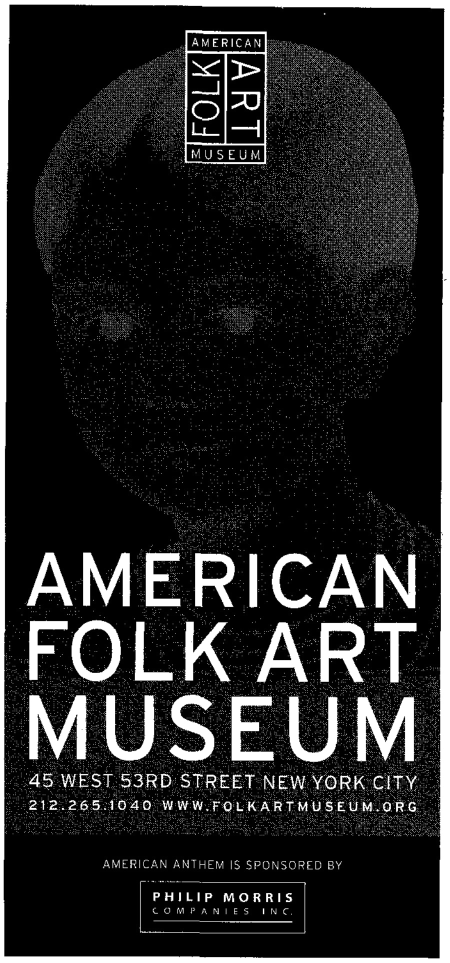

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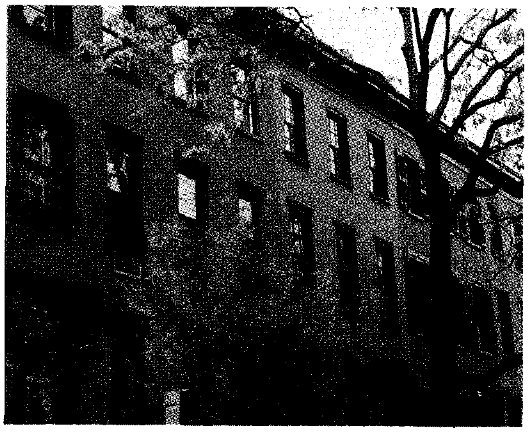

DOWNTOWN

Those who've never been to New York don't realize how much there is to see and do downtown. Home to some of the world's finest cuisine, art galleries, and boutiques, it is easily accessible and inexpensive to explore from east to west or north to south with an unlimited MetroCard.

From Chinatown and Little Italy, to SoHo, TriBeCa, and the South Street Seaport, the island's cultural diversity is evident in its restaurants, emporiums, and street life. Always exciting, the Chinese New Year celebration is a staple of New York City's annual calendar. This year marks the Year of the Horse, and Asian festivities and delicacies will be abundant throughout the colorful neighborhood.

GOINGS ON IN NEW YORK

The city that perpetually reinvents itself continues to innovate. Some of the newest things in town include two brand new Ritz-Carlton hotels . . . Jimmy's Uptown, the chic nightclub/restaurant attracting celebrities and trendsetters to Harlem . . . and Broadway's much-anticipated "The Crucible" starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney.

In addition, the reborn American Folk Art Museum recently reopened in midtown. In subtle and sophisticated ways, the institution's architectural style now complements its contents. View the Ralph Esmerian collection and the work of twentieth-century outsider artist Henry Darger, both up through June.

The International Center of Photography, now located on 43rd Street, has expanded its mission to encompass the new electronic imaging media that promises to shape the twenty-first century, just as photography did the twentieth.

Visitors "will be surprised by how much of New York is not merely open for business, but going out of its way to do things that are really nice for visitors," says Tim Zagat. "Everything in New York City is now less expensive and more accessible."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

New York City's Official Visitor Information Center is located at 810 Seventh Avenue (53rd Street). Hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 A.M. to 6 P.M. and Saturday and Sunday, 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Details on all Paint the Town Red White & Blue offers and participating venues are available online at www.nycvisit.com or by calling 212-484-1222. For a free visitor's guide, call 1-800-NYCVISIT toll free.

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Sleep at the Waldorf-Astoria (301 Park Avenue, at 50th Street; 212-355-3000), where princes and presidents have lodged since 1931. With a Paint the Town Red White & Blue savings card, luxurious guest rooms in the Waldorf Towers (28th–42nd floors) are available for $299 nightly (seven-day advance booking required; use code "PR"). Enjoy meals at the elegant Bull and Bear steak house and Oscar's American brasserie at twenty per cent off lunch or dinner. Or choose a NYC Freedom Package that includes dinner, a Broadway show, and accommodations at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel.

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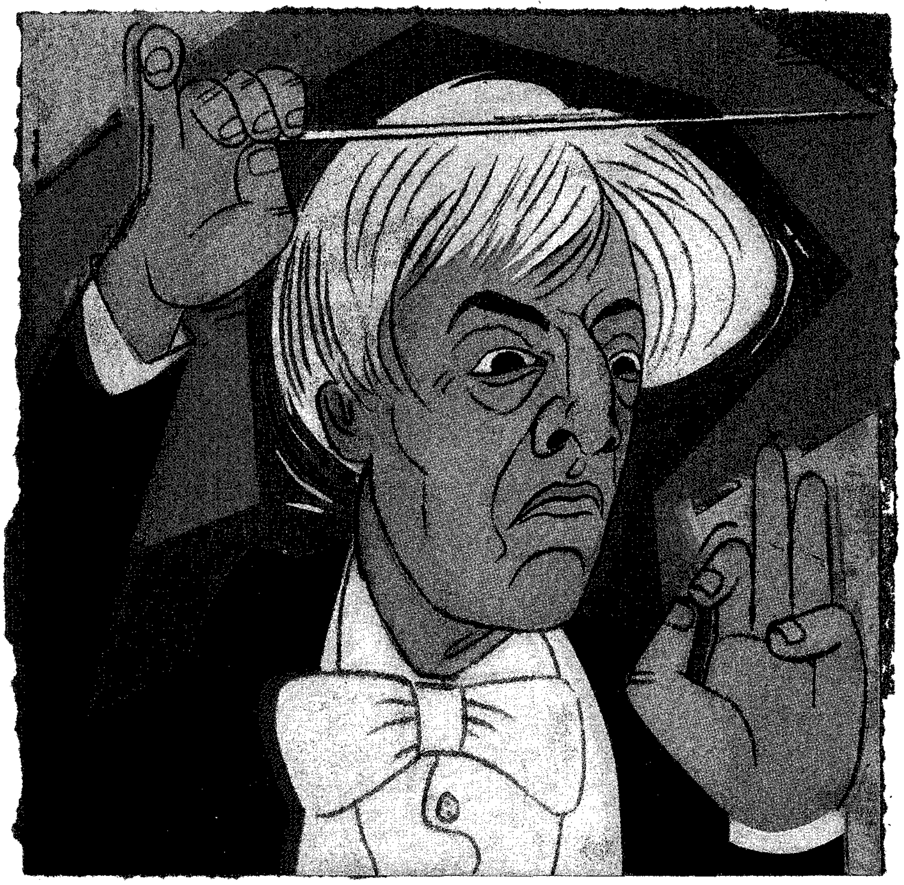
new open-air skylight. The photographs and drawings from that project are accompanied by a little Matta-Clark-style buzz-saw work in the gallery. Through Feb. 16. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

ALAN SUICIDE
When Jeffrey Deitch moved to New York in the seventies, he fell for Suicide's eponymous punk band and for his sculpture, assemblages of rewired light bulbs and found objects. Suicide, who hasn't had a show up since 1983 (though he hit European pop charts as Alan Vega in the interim), is staging a comeback with this literally glowing collection of new and reconstructed work. His rock-and-roll life style makes a guest appearance in a stack of cassettes placed at the center of a crucifix and a collection of empty Smirnoff bottles in the center of another. Through Feb. 23. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)



Christoph von Dohnányi, a conductor who leads the most daring modern music with the same refinement he brings to the German classics, makes his last Carnegie Hall appearances as music director of the Cleveland Orchestra, January 24-26.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Short List

MARLENE MC CARTY
American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St., 941-0401,
through Feb. 16; and Keenan, 3 Crosby St.,
431-5083, through March 23.
SIEMON ALLEN / MELISSA GOULD / COCO FUSCO
Artists Space, 38 Greene St. 226-3970.
Through March 2.

PHOTOGRAPHY

EDWARD BURTYNSKY
The Canadian color photographer Edward Burtynsky is attracted to the sort of large-scale spectacles that have proved irresistible to photojournalists for so long; the acres of discarded rubber tires in California or the "Mad Max"-like wastelands in Bangladesh, where dead cargo ships are cut to pieces by day laborers. The hyperclarity of the large prints, a testament to Burtynsky's technical ability, provides so much detail that the surfaces flirt with abstraction. It's easy to spot Pollock-like passages in the endless pattern of rubber circles and Ellsworth Kelly's harsh geometry in the metal bones of dismembered ships. Through March 2. (Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 925-3500.)

RICHARD ROTHMAN
Rothman makes trees, automobiles, and buildings the protagonists of his beautifully constructed black-and-white East and West Coast landscapes. In "New Housing Development, L.A.," a lone brick leans up against a pristine suburban wall, while a freshly planted tree seems to look over the wall at a larger version of itself planted in the distance. In another L.A. image, adolescent palm trees, their rootballs covered in burlap and their trunks tied down to the flatbed of a trailer, await their turn to be set into the designed landscape that surrounds them. Through Feb. 16. (Rodgers, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810.)

SPENCER TUNICK
Before he became known for his elaborate and controversial photo-"happenings"—staging shots of hundreds of naked people in tourist sites around the world—Tunick was a photography assistant to his father, shooting banquets and other events in upstate New York. These portraits have a wonderful eye for period detail and a tongue-in-cheek humor, as in the picture of an old lady's wrinkled face, echoed by a bowl of equally wizened pickles on a table. In fact, all these pictures seem to be pickled; they look like outtakes from a commercial for beautiful Mount Airy Lodge. Tunick's interest in the body is already apparent. One anomalous picture depicts a naked man covered in balloons. Another shows a big pot belly, minus the head and feet, bulging outward, as if to escape the really bad suit. Through Feb. 2. (I-20, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.)

EDWARD WESTON
The Weston family contributed many items from their private collections, making this exhibition of vintage prints into a review of sorts; call it Edward Weston's greatest hits. The pictures include work in portraiture, landscape, and still-life, and most allude to the artists in Weston's circle either directly—the painter Diego Rivera is seen from a low angle with the brim of his hat floating above his head like a halo—or elliptically, as in "Clouds, Mexico" (1924) and the modernist "Egg and Bone" (1930), with their echoes of the work of Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe. Through Jan. 26. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—The photographs in **"Hidden Truths: Bloody Sunday 1972"** bear witness to the events of January 30, 1972, when the British Army killed thirteen Republican protesters and bystanders in Derry, Northern Ireland. Like the J.F.K. assassination, Bloody Sunday has spawned a field of study. A purportedly final government report on the subject failed to close the debate, and the snapshots shown here were among the evidence in a recent decision to reopen the inquiry. Viewers can come to their own conclusions about the deaths of Jackie Duddy (four photographs) and Barney McGuigan (two, and an image of a banner being dipped in a pool of blood after his body was removed). Through March 17. ♦ **"Another Vietnam: Pictures of the War from the Other Side"** and **"The First Snapshots,"** an exhibition of candids shot by amateur photographers in the eighteen-hundreds with the earliest Kodak cameras, both through March 17. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

DAVID ARMSTRONG
Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through Feb. 16.
E. J. BELLOCQ
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410. Through Feb. 2.
PERRY OGDEN
Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-3900.
Through Jan. 26.
KUNIÉ SUGIURA
Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.
Through Feb. 2.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Jan. 24 at 10:15 A.M.: "Property of a Private Collector, Sold Without Reserve," paintings by Dutch, English, and other European artists from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Immediately after comes "Revolution in Art," an auction of paintings from the era of Washington and Napoleon by such artists as Goya, David, and Hubert Robert; Baron Gerard's portrait of the Princesse de Talleyrand, circa 1804-05, leads the sale. ♦ Jan. 24 at 2: "Important Old Master Paintings Including European Works of Art," a sale featuring works by Rubens ("The Nativity," from 1608), Ludovico Carracci, Van Dyck, Chardin, and many others. ♦ Jan. 25 at 10:15 A.M.: "Old Master Drawings," including work by Delacroix, Rembrandt ("Buildings by the Diemerdijk," estimated to sell for approximately two million dollars), and a trio of fanciful gouaches by Henri de Gissey, designer of court entertainments during the early reign of Louis XIV. Following the sale, at approximately noon, is an auction of works on paper belonging to the collection of Charles Ryskamp, including works by such artists as Tiepolo, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Thurber ("There Isn't Room in this House for Belles Lettres and Me Both"). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Jan. 23 at 10 A.M.: "Old Master and Nineteenth-Century Drawings," including works by Montagna, Parmigianino, and Liotard ("A Woman in a Turkish Costume Instructing a Servant," expected to sell for approximately one million dollars). ♦ Jan. 23 at 2 and Jan. 24 at 10 A.M. and 2: "The British Interior," three sessions devoted to English furniture, paintings, ceramics, and Chinese export porcelain. ♦ Jan. 25 at 10 A.M.: J. M. W. Turner's "Sheerness as Seen from the Nore," estimated to bring up to eight

million dollars, leads a sale of Old Master paintings, which also includes works by such artists as Van Goyen and Canaletto. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE
Jan. 23 at 10 A.M.: English and Continental furniture and decorations, along with a selection of Old Master paintings and drawings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

OUTSIDER ART FAIR
The annual show of art brut, self-taught, visionary, and intuitive art, including works by Aaron Holiday, Morris Hirschfield (the painting "Boy with Dog," from 1945), and Henry Darger. (The Puck Building, Houston St. at Lafayette St. 777-5218. Jan. 25-27.)

WINTER ANTIQUES SHOW
The forty-eighth annual show continues, a benefit for the East Side House Settlement social-service agency in Mott Haven, the Bronx. (Hilton New York, 1335 Sixth Ave. 718-292-7392. Through Jan. 27.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's 1982 production of **"Idomeneo"** returns after its autumn run. James Levine's spacious conducting gives the score a noble breadth; Plácido Domingo takes the title role. Also with Hei-Kyung Hong, Alexandra Deshorties, Anne Sofie von Otter, and Mark Oswald. (Jan. 23 at 8 and Jan. 26 at 1.) ♦ The season première of the Jonathan Miller production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** with Soile Isokoski (her début, as the Countess), Korliss Uecker, Kristine Jepson, Peter Mattei (another début, as the Count), and Ferruccio Furlanetto (in the title role); Donald Runnicles conducts. (Jan. 24 and Jan. 28 at 8.) ♦ **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Matthew Polenzani, Dwayne Croft, John Del Carlo, and Furlanetto; Yves Abel. (Jan. 25 at 8.) ♦ The final performance this season of Verdi's **"Don Carlo,"** with Galina Gorchakova, Dolora Zajick, Richard Margison, Dmitri Hvorostovsky (a suave and dashing Rodrigo), Samuel Ramey (a commanding King Philip), and Paata Burchuladze; Valery Gergiev. (Jan. 26 at 7.) ♦ **"Tosca,"** with Sylvie Valayre, Richard Leech, and James Morris; Daniel Oren. (Jan. 29 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK"
Encompass Opera Theatre presents a return engagement of Grigori Frid's one-woman opera, with the soprano Dunja Pechstein. Nancy Rhodes is the director; Sybille Werner conducts. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 206-1515. Jan. 24-26 at 8 and Jan. 27 at 3. Through Feb. 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Christine Schäfer, the Met's Lulu last spring, returns to make her Philharmonic début singing Berg's aphoristic and sensual "Altenberg Lieder," his first orchestral work, along with two Mozart concert arias. Daniele Gatti conducts the program, which also includes selections from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" and Webern's "Slow Movement," a late-Romantic fragment originally for string quartet. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Jan. 24 and Jan. 26 at 8 and Jan. 25 at 2.)

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
For some, the Cleveland Orchestra is the ultimate symphonic ensemble: in no other group—except, perhaps, the Vienna Philharmonic—do a hundred virtuoso musicians seem to play like the limbs of a single, magnificent body. For the last twenty years their patrician conductor, Christoph von Dohnányi, has been a fastidious custodian of the sound, first molded by George Szell; he brings the orchestra to Carnegie Hall for his last concerts there as music director, leading programs that blend core German repertory with new music of a decidedly modernist bent. Jan. 24 at 8: Lutoslawski's "Funeral Music" for strings, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and the New York première of Wolfgang Rihm's "Concerto: Dithyrambe" (with the Emerson String Quartet). ♦ Jan. 25 at 8: More music by Beethoven (the Symphony No. 5), along with Sibelius's bracing, proto-minimalist "Night Ride and Sunrise" and another New York première, Harrison Birtwistle's "The Shadow of Night." ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: Strauss's elegiac "Metamorphosen," for strings, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (with the singers Christine Brewer, Nancy Maultsby, Paul Groves, and Neal Davies, along with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus). (247-7800.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Music inspired by Dante is the theme for the conductor Leon Botstein's latest musical adventure, leading works by Liszt (the tempestuous "Dante Symphony") and a concert version of Rachmaninoff's rarely performed one-act opera "Francesca da Rimini" (which boasts a libretto by Modest Tchaikovsky, younger brother of you know who). (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 25 at 8. For information about tickets, call 581-1365.)

"MARY TRIUMPHANT"
Since Mary I of England has never been one of history's favorite figures, the musical culture she engendered—made to suit the Roman Catholic liturgy she revived—has not received the sustained attention it deserves. So holds the Miller Theatre's executive director George Steel, who conducts the Vox Vocal Ensemble in the first of three concerts devoted to the intriguingly ornate and abstract music of such composers as Sheppard and Tye. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Jan. 26 at 7.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine conducts music by Berg (the "Seven Early Songs," with Renée Fleming) and Mahler (the Symphony No. 6 in A Minor). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 27 at 3.)

ORCHESTRE DE PARIS
In the first of two concerts, Christoph Eschenbach conducts the orchestra in music by Bartók (the Piano Concerto No. 2, with Pierre-Laurent Aimard), Berlioz (the "Symphonie Fantastique"), and Henri Dutilleux. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 29 at 8.)

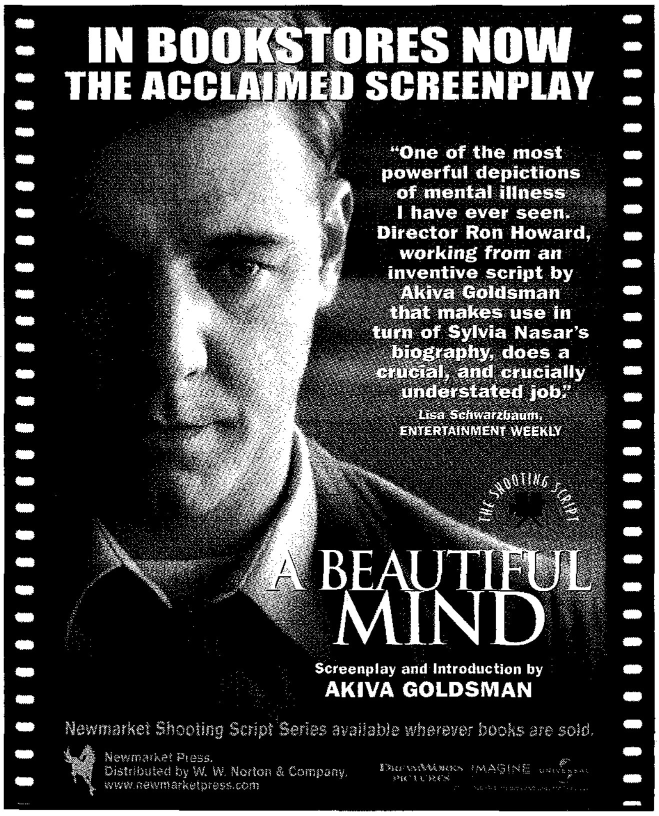
RECITALS

RADU LUPU
The Romanian pianist brings his dark and alluring sound to music by Schubert, Beethoven (the Sonata No. 27 in E Minor), and Enescu. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 23 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE
British modernism, in its more theatrical forms, is the theme for this impressive group's latest concert, with a program ranging from sixties classics by Birtwistle and Maxwell Davies (a rare performance of "Missa Super l'Homme Armé," with the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger) to more recent works by George Benjamin and Michael Finnissy. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 23 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "DOUBLE EXPOSURE"
Back-to-back performances of recent works by three intriguing young composers, Paul Moravec ("Mood Swings," for piano trio), Daniel Schnyder, and Scott Johnson (the New York première of "Practical Music"), with a wine reception in between. The musicians include the clarinettist David Shifrin and the violinist Maria Bachmann. (Rose Rehearsal Studio, Rose Building, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St. 875-5788. Jan. 24 at 6:45 and 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Two programs coördinated by the violist Paul Neubauer. Jan. 24-25 at 7:30: Music by Scriabin (the Fourth Piano Sonata, with Wu Han) and Schumann precedes a set of songs with viola obbligato by Rachmaninoff, Gounod, and others sung by the tenor Robert White, who will also add some Irish melodies (including "Danny Boy") to the mix. ♦ Jan. 26 at 7:30 and Jan. 27 at 4: The violinist Ani Kavafian and the cellist Fred Sherry join



IN BOOKSTORES NOW
THE ACCLAIMED SCREENPLAY
"One of the most powerful depictions of mental illness I have ever seen. Director Ron Howard, working from an inventive script by Akiva Goldsman that makes use in turn of Sylvia Nasar's biography, does a crucial, and crucially understated job."
Lisa Schwarzbaum, ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
THE SHOOTING SCRIPT
A BEAUTIFUL MIND
Screenplay and Introduction by
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Newmarket Shooting Script Series available wherever books are sold.
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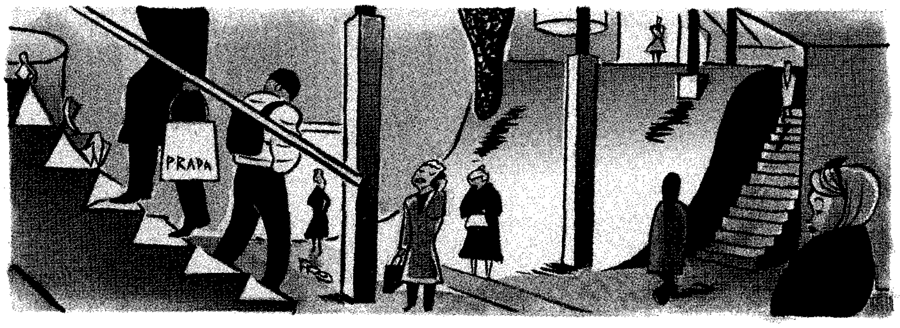
DREAMWORKS IMAGINE UNIVERSAL PICTURES

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Retail Space: The Final Frontier

At 6 P.M. on a frigid Saturday evening, two little boys are moonwalking backward up the giant zebrawood ski slope in the new **PRADA NEW YORK EPICENTER** (575 Broadway; 334-8888), a structure that Rem Koolhaas, who designed it, calls "the wave." Across from the wave, a staircase as monumental as the Odessa steps displays not just an array of shoes but a crowd of exhausted shoppers, among them a portly guy draped in cashmere stretched out full length and chatting on a cell phone, and a girl with the face of a fairy princess petting a small dog. Three teen-agers wearing expressions of studied nonchalance, their arms heavy with Banana Republic and Gap shopping bags, squeeze past pistachio-green shelves loaded with beige chiffon gowns and hanging video screens.



MARCELLUS HALL

"The idea was to bring the street inside," Eric Chang, one of the project's architects, explains on a relatively calm afternoon a few days later. Chang, who has a shaved head and is wearing a bright-red North Face parka, shares a treasure trove of Prada lore: for example, that the strange two-story gray hanging sock was hand-knitted out of metal mesh fabric by Petra Blaisse, a Dutch textile artist, and holds seven hundred pounds of audio equipment; that the wave opens up to reveal an "events platform" and a projection screen sequestered in a floor hatch; that the black-and-white marble floor is an homage to the first Prada store, opened nearly a century ago in Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele; that the new store's original plans called for the Prince Street subway station to exit into what is now the shoe department, but the M.T.A. demurred.

"Those cages can be shoved out of the way whenever you want," Chang says, pointing to a faintly sinister group of aluminum-mesh boxes, brute versions of go-go cages that hang from motorized ceiling tracks. There may be no place to order an espresso, but there is plenty of room to lounge: low platforms across from the fitting rooms have squishy square cushions made of medical gel that Chang says is "the same density as human flesh." In the fitting rooms, magic mirrors show customers exactly how they look from the back (this can fall into the category of too much information), while floor buttons turn the glass doors from clear to opaque. A device called a "radio-frequency closet" feeds color and size information about garments to a nearby screen, though on at least one recent occasion the system failed to preëmpt a film of floating astronauts.

If the store is relentlessly forward-thinking about what used to be called retailing, much of the merchandise is curiously retro. In addition to a gaggle of vintage suède handbags in the cylindrical glass elevator, a number of items have been reissued from collections past—the daringly dowdy olive-and-brown printed coats from the early nineties, the thick-soled Mary Janes that caused such a sensation a few years back—apparently for shoppers who regretted not buying them the first time around. But even twenty-thousand-dollar broadtail coats are dwarfed by the architecture: no matter how interesting the goods are, the space is the thing. Just outside the Broadway entrance, a woman of a certain age in ankle-length mink seems puzzled by the lack of a sign. "I'm not sure what this place is," she says to her companion. "I think it has something to do with shopping."

—*Lynn Yaeger*

Neubauer for a program of string trios by Mozart and Beethoven. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

NEW JUILLIARD ENSEMBLE: "TWELVE TONES AND BEYOND"

Whatever one thinks of Arnold Schoenberg's music, his invention of the twelve-tone technique almost eighty years ago was the seismic development that every subsequent composer had to absorb or reject. Joel Sachs, the ensemble's director, begins a six-concert series that explores the stylistically diverse music of three generations of composers—including Stravinsky, Copland, Boulez, Schnittke, and many others—who have advanced the possibilities of Schoenberg's revolution with distinction and flair. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Jan. 25 and Jan. 28-29 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406. Through Feb. 1.)

MIRÓ QUARTET

In its Weill Recital Hall début, the young quartet presents works by Haydn (the jaunty "Frog" Quartet), Brahms, and the contemporary composer Chan Ka Nin. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 25 at 8.)

WOLFGANG HOLZMAIR

The Austrian baritone, a lieder specialist in the tradition of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, presents a recital of songs by Mendelssohn, Schubert, Ravel ("Cinq Mélodies Populaires Greques"), and others; the pianist is Russell Ryan. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Jan. 27 at 2.)

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Starting off a four-concert series at the 92nd Street Y, the eminent ensemble performs two works by Brahms (including the Clarinet Quintet, with David Krakauer) along with the American première of a new work by the Spanish composer José Luis Turina. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Jan. 26 at 8.)

CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF AND LEIF OVE ANDSNES

The violinist and the pianist, longtime recital partners, perform works by Beethoven, Schubert (the Duo in A Major), and Bartók. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Jan. 29 at 8.)

NEW MUSIC AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL

Jan. 28 at 8: Speculum Musicae, with the soprano Susan Narucki, presents a program of premières by Vivier ("Bouchara"), Grisey, and Ivan Fedele. ♦ Jan. 29 at 8: Music by Aaron Jay Kernis and Ned Rorem (the première of "Nine Episodes for Four Players") highlights the first Merkin concert by the Contrasts Quartet, formerly known as the Eberli Ensemble. (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

Jan. 23 at 7: By the short-story writer Nico Baumbach and the poet Maggie Nelson, from their contributions to the literary magazine *Open City*, and by Rick Rofihe, from his essay in "Before & After: Stories from New York." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 28 at 7: By the musician and critic David Rothenberg, from his memoir-esque travelogue, "Sudden Music." (Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 28 at 8: By the *New Yorker* writers Ian Frazier and Jamaica Kincaid, from their work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

TALKS

Jan. 23 at 6:30: The novelist and art writer Siri Hustvedt considers the works of Goya. (New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 673-6466.) ♦ Jan. 24 at 6:30: Ann-Charlotte Gavel Adams, Harry G. Carlson, and other scholars of August Strindberg discuss the Swedish playwright's œuvre. (Scandinavia House, 58 Park Ave., between 37th and 38th Sts. 879-9779.) ♦ Jan. 24 at 6:30: The artists Anita Kunz, Barry Blitt, and Bruce McCall, all of whom are native Canadians and *New Yorker* contributors, talk about illustrating scenes, imaginary and real, of New York City. Steven Heller, a senior art director at the *Times*, is the moderator. (Society of Illustrators, 128 E. 63rd St. 596-1696.)

MOVIES OPENING

AMERICAN ADOBO
Paolo Montalban stars in this comedy about five Filipino-American friends living in New York City. Opening Jan. 25. (Village East.)

BEYOND THE OCEAN
Tony Pemberton's drama about a pregnant Russian woman who is abandoned by her American boyfriend. Opening Jan. 24. (Anthology.)

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO
Swordplay and secret identities in eighteenth-century France with Guy Pearce and Jim Caviezel in the lead roles. Kevin Reynolds ("Waterworld") directed. Opening Jan. 25.

HEY, HAPPY!
Noam Gonick directed this movie set in the industrial landscape of Winnipeg, about the gay rave scene. Opening Jan. 25. (Pioneer.)

I AM SAM
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Jan. 25.

KUNG POW: ENTER THE FIST
Writer-director Steve Oedekerk has digitally altered a 1976 kung-fu film, inserting new comedic scenes and redubbed dialogue. Opening Jan. 25.

MAELSTROM
A drama about the downfall of a successful twentysomething fashion designer (Marie-Josée Cruz), narrated by a fish. Directed by Denis Villeneuve. In French. Opening Jan. 25. (Quad Cinema.)

METROPOLIS
An *anime* film based on a story by Osamu Tezuka and directed by Rintaro. Opening Jan. 25. (Empire 25 and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES
A thriller with Richard Gere, who plays a journalist investigating reports of winged creatures in a small West Virginia town. Also with Laura Linney and Alan Bates. Mark Pellington directed. Opening Jan. 25.

STORYTELLING
Todd Solondz wrote and directed this two-part movie; the first section tells of a college fiction workshop and the second of the making of a documentary about suburban teen-age life. With Selma Blair, Paul Giamatti, John Goodman, and Robert Wisdom. Opening Jan. 25. (Angelika Film Center.)

A WALK TO REMEMBER
A romantic teen drama set in North Carolina, in which a troubled teen-ager (Shane West) falls for the minister's daughter (Mandy Moore). Opening Jan. 25.

WANNABES
Two brothers from Brooklyn, working as waiters, decide to try their hand at loan-sharking and extortion in a comedy about mobsters. Written by William DeMeo, who co-directed with Charles A. Addessi. Opening Jan. 25.

WAYDOWNTOWN
Gary Burns ("The Suburbanators") directed this comedy about four office workers who make a bet to see who can stay inside the longest. Opening Jan. 25. (Angelika Film Center.)

FILM NOTES

ACROSS 110TH STREET
In the opening scene of this 1972 urban action film, two African-American thieves dressed as cops (Paul Benjamin and Ed Bernard) bluff their way into a Harlem tenement that serves as the Mob's counting house, and with the help of their driver (Antonio Fargas) get away with $300,000 in Mafia money. They leave behind a trail of corpses, including a couple of cops, and spend the rest of this unremittingly brutal film as prey for the N.Y.P.D. and vicious Italian and black gangsters. Shot on location, the movie functions as a vivid kinetic snapshot of a deteriorating New York City; every construction site is more like a deconstruction site, and every hallway seems to be covered with rust or mold. The whole movie has an end-of-the-tether urgency, and amid all the violent squalling, you feel thankful for the elegant underplaying of Yaphet Kotto, as a police lieutenant. With Anthony Quinn and Anthony Franciosa.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image, Jan. 27.)

ALI
Will Smith—muscled up, ears flattened, and with his features reshaped—gets the right Kentucky music in his voice in his impersonation of Muhammad Ali. He's also developed the slow-moving meditativeness of a big-bodied man, but he misses the spontaneity of the brazen young Ali, and nothing can match the speed of Ali's punch. This elaborate bio-pic, directed by Michael Mann, who wrote the script with Eric Roth, is beautifully made, but it lacks a fresh point of view or even successful dramatic shaping. Many of the actors, however, are superb, including Jamie Foxx, Jeffrey Wright, Giancarlo Esposito, and Mykelti Williamson as a young Don King.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/24 & 31/01.) (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

AMÉLIE
A waifish Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it appears to have touched a universal nerve. Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (11/5/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Paris.)

BADLANDS
Probably we've all seen those convicted killers in prison documentaries on TV who sound uninvolved and mechanical when they talk about their crimes; Terrence Malick's 1973 début picture extends that uninvolvement to the whole culture. Set at the end of the fifties, it's about an emotionless young killer (Martin Sheen) and his fifteen-year-old girlfriend (Sissy Spacek), whose killing spree starts in South Dakota. The young lovers are psychologically aberrant and yet just like everybody else; their moral vacuum spreads over the flat, dead landscape. Malick appears to be saying that mass-culture banality is killing our souls and making everybody affectless, but his detached tone puts the viewer in the ugly position of feeling culturally superior to the people on the screen. An intellectualized movie—shrewd and artful, carefully styled to sustain its low-key view of dissociation—but so preconceived that there's nothing left to respond to.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Jan. 25-26.)

A BEAUTIFUL MIND
If you think the title stinks, try the movie. Russell Crowe plays John Nash, a real-life mathematician whose most radical work was produced in his early twenties and who shared the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics at the age of sixty-six. In between lay years of darkness, during which Nash was assailed by paranoid schizophrenia. When it comes to the delicate matter of his delusions, this earnest movie, written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard, pulls a flagrant scam: whole characters and episodes are presented as urgently authentic, only to be revealed as figments of a cracked imagination. Crowe pulls out the stops, but he looks too bullish and controlled for such a pitiable victim. On safer ground, Ed Harris lends his icy eyes to the role of a Cold War spymaster. The movie grinds on forever until it bumps into redemption; the best reason to stay with it is Jennifer Connelly, who smolders and suffers to perfection as Nash's weary wife. Math skills not required.—*A.L.* (1/7/02) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BLACK HAWK DOWN
This account of the ill-fated 1993 Special Forces action in Mogadishu, Somalia, which resulted in the death of eighteen Americans, is exceptionally violent but also truthful to the pain and disorder of battle. It's very clearly directed by Ridley Scott, who allows you to see where the different groups of men are fighting in relation to one another. The movie suggests that despite the casualties the battle was not a total failure but rather a demonstration of strength—the men were killed, in part, because they stayed in the danger zone to rescue survivors from the two helicopters that were shot down. With Sam Shepard, Tom Sizemore, and Josh Hartnett, all submerging themselves in the business at hand. Ken Nolan, adapting Mark Bowden's book, achieves the right tone of matter-of-factness, resolution, and defiance.—*D.D.* (12/24 & 31/01) (42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF
A genre-busting treat—part costume drama, part martial-arts horror film—concerning a ferocious, man-eating beast that roams the mountains of eighteenth-century France. The film, directed energetically by Christophe Gans, gets the jolts started with the gruesome death of a peasant girl, which is imaginatively taken from the opening scene of "Jaws." Gans casts his film with gorgeous performers (Samuel Le Bihan as the scientist sent to investigate, Monica Bellucci as a mysterious courtesan), and his eye-candy sets and thoroughly fruity ideas pack the film with enough outré juxtapositions to make Baz Luhrmann blush. In French.—*Bruce Diones* (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

GOSFORD PARK
An amazingly successful contrivance: this Agatha Christie-style houseparty murder mystery, set in 1932, plants itself deep into social reality and achieves the kind of candor about class and sex that Christie would never have been capable of. The idea came from Bob Balaban and Robert Altman; the brilliant screenplay was written by Julian Fellowes. Altman directs an enormous cast with lightness and speed and a masterly ability to pull the many little pieces of intrigue together into a coherent whole. Casually, the movie chronicles the end of the rigid British class system and the liberation of the working class through popular entertainment. The once-in-a-lifetime cast includes Michael Gambon, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Jeremy Northam, and Charles Dance as the swells, and Helen Mirren, Eileen Atkins, Alan Bates, Clive Owen, and Emily Watson as the servants. Bob Balaban plays a Hollywood producer of Charlie Chan mysteries, and Ryan Phillippe is his valet, a cherub-faced erotic toy that anyone can play with.—*D.D.* (1/14/02) (Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

IN THE BEDROOM
In Camden, Maine, a twenty-one-year-old college student, Frank (Nick Stahl), is having a headlong summer affair with a local woman, Natalie (Marisa Tomei). Natalie is separated from her husband (William Mapother), the loutish scion of a

prominent local family. When the husband kills his rival, Frank's hypercivilized parents (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) begin to consider vengeance as a way of saving themselves from destroying each other. This Sophoclean tale, fleshed out from an elliptical short story by Andre Dubus, draws its strength from minute observation of settings and moods, and from a gradual tightening of the winch. Much of it is very quiet (the first-time director, Todd Field, is an actor and a photographer), but when it explodes, the violence actually means something.—*D.D.* (11/26/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 34th Street Theatre.)

KANDAHAR
The latest film by the Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf couldn't be better timed. The story is just a series of gestures: Nafas (Nelofer Pazira), an Afghan woman who left her country as a teen-ager, returns to look for her suicidal sister. On the way to Kandahar (conceived as a state of mind as much as a place), she runs into a variety of helpers disguising themselves to avoid persecution by the Taliban—men in burkas, a boy faking an inability to read the Koran, a benevolent African-American wearing a false beard. The sequences don't have much continuity, but Makhmalbaf turns the desolation of the country into scenes of iconic power. In Farsi and English.—*D.D.* (12/10/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE LADY VANISHES
Alfred Hitchcock's 1938 murder mystery about a fussy, jolly old lady who boards a train and disappears on it is directed with such skill and velocity that it has come to represent the quintessence of screen suspense. It provides some of the finest examples of Hitchcock touches—little shocks and perversities of editing and detail. The hero is played by a tall, callow young man making his first major film appearance—Michael Redgrave; the heroine is Margaret Lockwood, and the lady is Dame May Whitty.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Jan. 24.)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS:
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING
It takes about forty-five minutes for the movie to emerge from Sir Ian McKellen's beard (he plays the garrulous wizard Gandalf), but once it does, this enormous hunk of quasi-medieval myth, based on the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, is consistently beautiful and exciting. The New Zealander director Peter Jackson, who wrote the screenplay with Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, works with enough dramatic tension and pictorial grandeur to sustain us through long periods of complicated exposition and heavy bouts of swordplay. Elijah Wood, of the troubled blue eyes, plays the hobbit Frodo. He is accompanied in this quest by Gandalf, two noble human warriors (Viggo Mortensen and Sean Bean), an intemperate, black-bearded dwarf (John Rhys-Davies), and various scampering halflings. The New Zealand landscapes—jagged mountains, thickety glens, limitless plains—add to the aura of enchantment.—*D.D.* (12/24 & 31/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE MAJESTIC
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

MONSTER'S BALL
Marc Forster's movie delivers an unworkable paradox: the characters are inarticulate, damaged people who have led heedless and tragic lives—portrayed with bitter realism—and yet the plotting is sheer Hollywood in its schemes and coincidences. Billy Bob Thornton is the Georgia corrections officer who conducts the execution of the husband (Sean "Puffy" Combs) of a local waitress (Halle Berry) and then falls in love with the widow. The slow, reticent dramaturgy has its moments of authenticity, especially in the balanced interracial romance: Thornton is quiet and affecting and Berry acts up a storm. Written by Milo Addica and Will Rokos.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Sunshine Cinema.)

MULHOLLAND DRIVE
A woman wanders away from a car wreck and into a strange house. Little old people scurry under the foot of a door, squeaking like mice. Yes, it's a David Lynch project. This one began life as a TV pilot; you can just imagine the aghast faces of the network executives as they saw what they had commissioned. The completed elongated weirdness, stretching to two and a half hours, feels discomfortingly at home on the larger screen; if you ever wanted to see an epic horror-soap, this is what it would look like. Many established Lynch motifs are in place, most of them summoned from one corner or another of the nineteen-fifties: the innocent blonde (Naomi Watts), the baffled brunette (Laura Elena Harring), the clueless cop (Robert Forster). Addicts of the director will tie themselves in knots trying to pick the lock of the film; the rest of us can lie back and enjoy the spooking.—*A.L.* (10/15/01) (Cinema Village, Empire 25, and 59th Street East Cinema.)

OCEAN'S ELEVEN
Steven Soderbergh's remake of the 1960 Vegas heist movie bristles with energy. Instead of the ineffably casual Rat Pack, Soderbergh has a cast of hardworking guys: George Clooney in the old Frank Sinatra role as the criminal mastermind, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Don Cheadle, Andy Garcia, and, in colorful support, Elliott Gould and Carl Reiner. Soderbergh constructs the movie in layers with lines of terse dialogue winging on and off the screen and fitting perfectly together. The robbery itself also depends on many interlocking pieces of theatre—moments of imposture and fakery which allow the gang members to breach the inner sanctum of the casinos. Despite all the cleverness and good humor, however, the movie peters out, and, by the end, you may wonder what it's all for.—*D.D.* (12/10/01) (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

ORANGE COUNTY
Mike White and Jake Kasdan, two of the talents who gave us the achingly nerdy television series "Freaks & Geeks," churn out a power-pop teen comedy for MTV Productions. The movie is loaded with cameos, the best of which is Lily Tomlin as a memory-impaired guidance counselor. When one of her lapses prevents the affable senior-class president (Colin Hanks) from gaining acceptance to Stanford, he decides to argue his case in person, enlisting the help of his crunchy girlfriend (Schuyler Fisk) and his sweaty armpit of a brother (Jack Black). Black, a volcanic pudgeball, spends most of his screen time snapping wisecracks in his tighty whities; needless to say, he's the funniest thing on display. In the movie's mellower moments, it slips in some clever jokes about the writing life and more than a few homoerotic asides. Kasdan and White are clearly having a lot of fun imagining Orange County as a land of the hopelessly vapid: who wouldn't want to attend a high school where the teacher says "Juliet?" and the students respond: "Claire Danes."—*Michael Agger* (First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.)

THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS
After the brilliance of "Rushmore," his level-headed look at the gifts of a misfit, where could Wes Anderson go next? In the event, he has broadened his scope to take in an entire family of misfits: the Tenenbaums, residing in their colorful town house like kooky modern leftovers from the age of Edith Wharton—an age of innocence indeed, despite the ill will that gusts around. The parents (Gene Hackman and Anjelica Huston) raised three overachieving children (Ben Stiller, Luke Wilson, and Gwyneth Paltrow) and then separated. We are here for the aftermath: the daughter's fading marriage to a bearded melancholic (Bill Murray), and other sunderings and patchings-up. The movie is packed tight with strong, if baffled, feelings, and yet we could be watching it through glass; Anderson specializes in the cool, astringent gaze, and for anyone sick of Hollywood heart-melters this could be the antidote.—*A.L.* (12/17/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE SHIPPING NEWS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

STOLEN KISSES
François Truffaut's first romantic comedy, released in 1968, is charming and likable, but maybe too easily likable. It's a series of improvisations on the young manhood and love life of Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), who was first presented at twelve, suffering from the callousness of the adult world, in "The 400 Blows." Here, Truffaut seems to start with the assumption that we already love his little Antoine and will find his ineptness and incompetence adorable. The feat of a master of improvisation would be to achieve the looseness and texture of "life" and the "magic" of movie art simultaneously—to tell a story as if it had been found. This story seems to have been planted; we're conscious of the players trotting around the streets of Paris playacting for the camera. It's a pleasantly negligible movie, with free, idiosyncratic touches: a little documentary interpolation on the speedy mail service, a lovely moment when the heroine (Claude Jade) teaches Antoine a method of buttering toast, and best of all, a marvellous character invention—Michel Lonsdale as the man who hires detectives to find out why nobody likes him. In French.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Jan. 29.)

WHAT TIME IS IT THERE?
A young Taipei watch vender reluctantly sells a pretty Paris-bound girl his own watch, then finds himself longing for her, so much so that he begins setting the clocks all over the city to Paris time. Meanwhile, his recently widowed mother is looking for signs that her dead husband has returned to her. Director Tsai Ming-liang's haunting meditation on loneliness and time is a lovely, mordant piece of moviemaking. His immobile camera compositions and bare-bones use of dialogue allow the performers to play out their complicated emotional lives with a dramatic stillness and a dotty humor that is, at times, breathtaking.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

CHARLOTTE GRAY
Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.
CODE UNKNOWN (12/3/01)
Quad Cinema.
DONNIE DARKO
Pioneer.
THE FAREWELL
Film Forum.
IRIS
Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3, and Lincoln Square.
THE PLASTIC PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE
Pioneer.
TIME OF FAVOR
Quad Cinema and Sutton 1 and 2.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.

Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Feb. 17: “Across 110th Street: Images of Harlem on Film.” Jan. 26 at 2: “Shaft” (1971, Gordon Parks). ♦ Jan. 26 at 4:30 “Dark Manhattan” (1937, Harry Fraser). ♦ Jan. 27 at 2: “Across 110th Street” (†). ♦ Jan. 27 at 4: “Hi-De-Ho” (1947, Josh Binney). ♦ Repertory night. Jan. 26-27 at 6:30: “The Seventh Seal” (1957, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish).

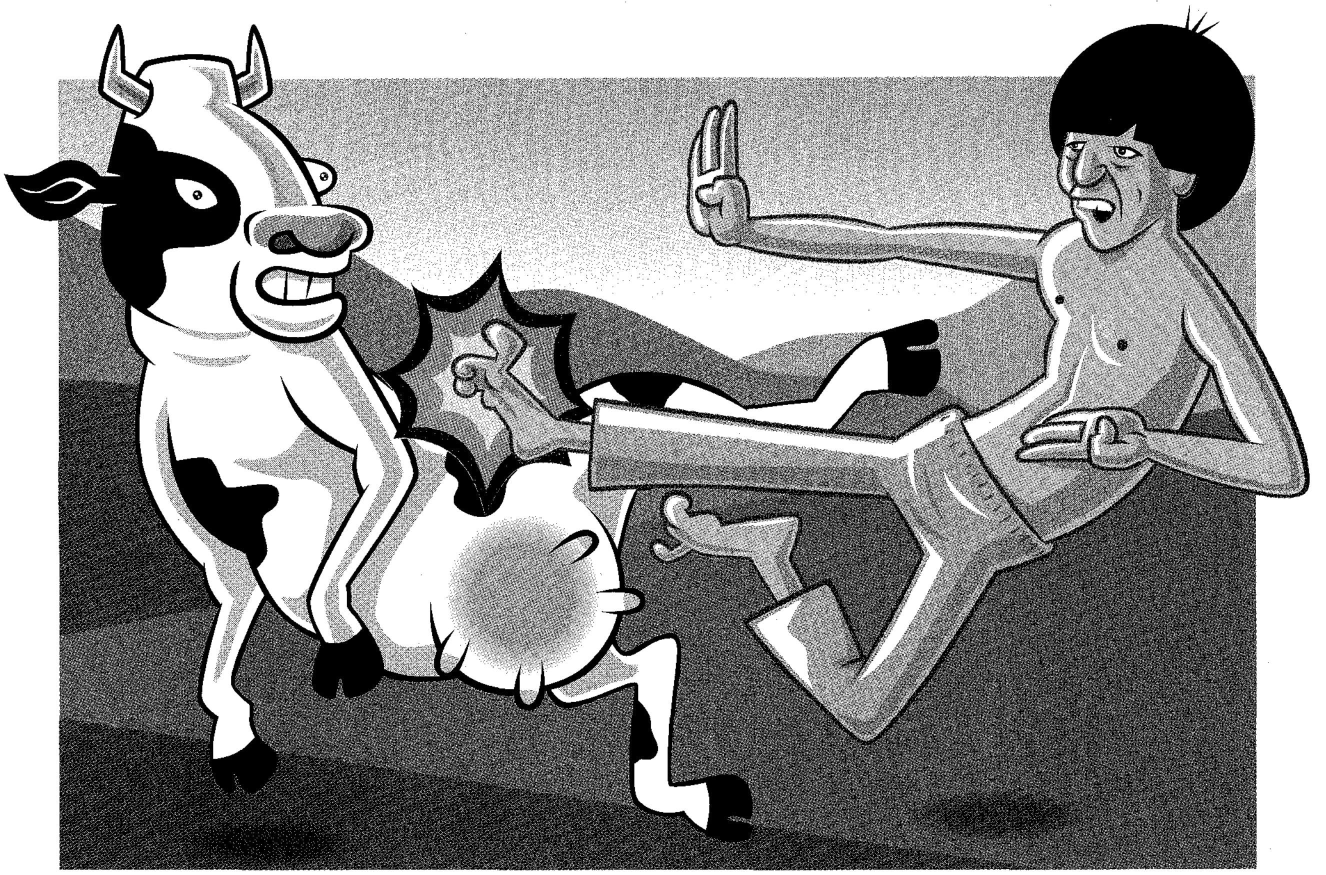
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—New filmmakers. Jan. 23 at 7: “More Than Flowers” (2001, Laura Beers), a documentary about New York's community gardens, and “The Brave Man” (2001, Joseph McCarthy), a modern re-creation of the Battle of Brooklyn. ♦ Jan. 23-25 at 6:30 and 9:30 and Jan. 26-27 at 3:30, 6:30, and 9:30: “Werckmeister Harmonies” (2000, Béla Tarr; in Hungarian).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Feb. 7: “Greatest Hits.” Jan. 23 at 3, 6:30, and 10: “Billy Liar” (1963, John Schlesinger). ♦ Jan. 23 at 1:20, 4:50, and 8:20: “Saturday Night and Sunday Morning” (1960, Karel Reisz). ♦ Jan. 24 at 3, 6:30, and 10: “The Lady Vanishes” (†). ♦ Jan. 24 at 1:20, 4:50, and 8:20: “The 39 Steps” (1935, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Jan. 25-26 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: “Badlands” (†). ♦ Jan. 25-26 at 2:50, 6:30, and 10:10: “Days of Heaven” (1978, Terrence Malick). ♦ Jan. 27-28 at 1, 4:30, and 8: “The 400 Blows” (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Jan. 27-28 at 2:50, 6:20, and 9:50: “Stolen Kisses” (†). ♦ Jan. 29 at 2:50, 6:35, and 10:20: “Jules and Jim” (1961, Truffaut; in French). ♦ Jan. 29 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30: “Diary of a Chambermaid” (1964, Luis Buñuel; in French).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Films that portray *la vie d'artiste*. Jan. 29 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: “The Golden Coach” (1952, Jean Renoir; in English).

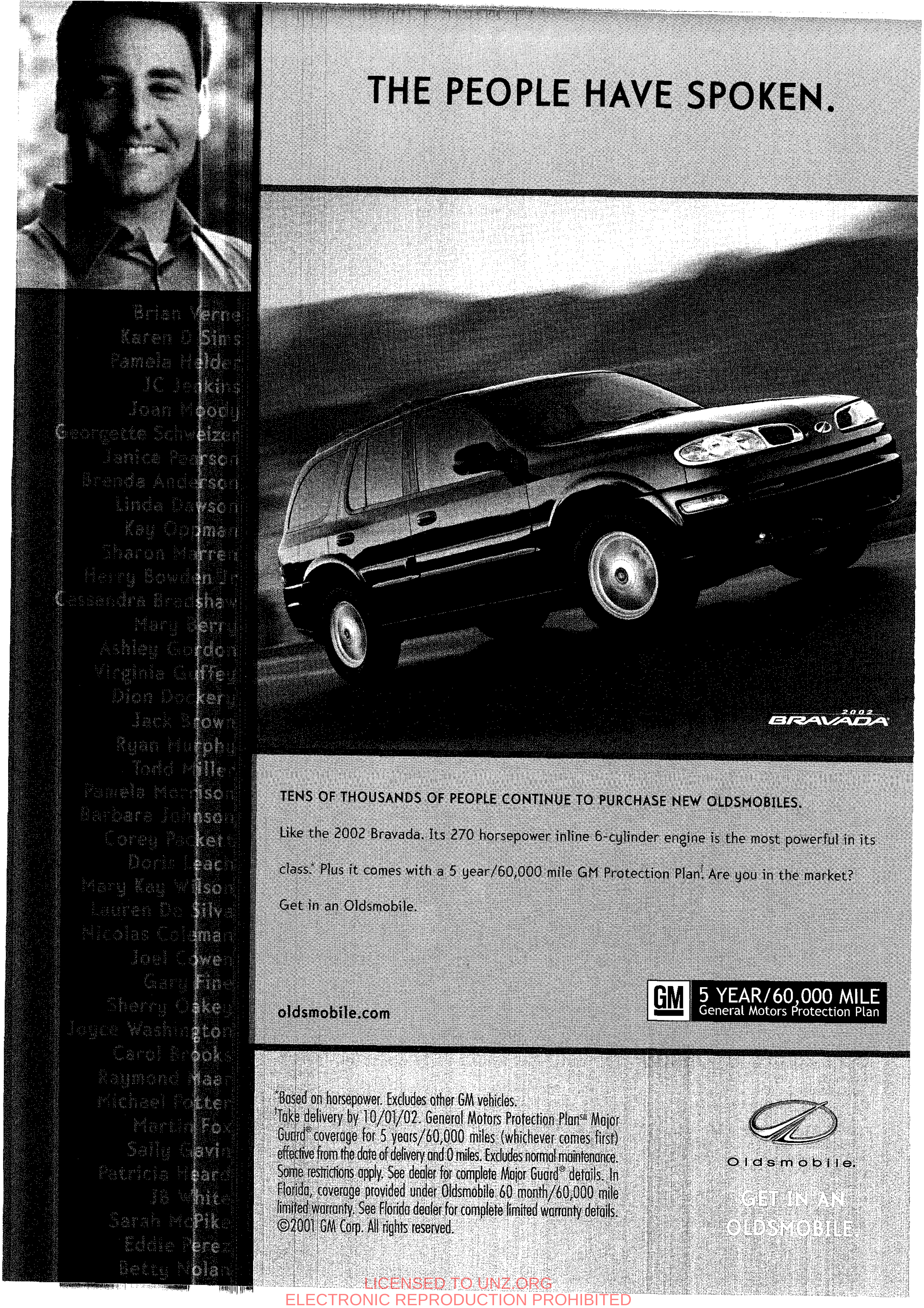
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Jan. 31: A tribute to the Italian actress Anna Magnani. Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Italian. Jan. 24 at 2:30: “The Rose Tattoo” (1955, Daniel Mann; in English). ♦ Jan. 24 at 6 and Jan. 25 at 2:30: “Scarred” (1947, Mario Mattoli). ♦ Jan. 25 at 6 and Jan. 27 at 2:30: “Campo de' Fiori” (1943, Mario Bonnard). ♦ Jan. 25 at 8 and Jan. 27 at 5: “A Passionate Thief/Laugh for Joy” (1960, Mario Monicelli). ♦ Jan. 28 at 2:30: “Mamma Roma” (1962, Pier Paolo Pasolini). ♦ Jan. 29 at 2:30: “Hell in the City/The Wild, Wild Women” (1958, Renato Castellani). ♦ Jan. 29 at 6: “The Blind Girl of Sorrento” (1934, Nunzio Malasomma). ♦ Special presentation. Jan. 26 at 1: “Parisette” (1922, Louis Feuillade; in French), with live piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Jan. 24: The Eleventh Annual New York Jewish Film Festival. Jan. 23 at 1: “Optimists” (2000, Jacky and Lisa Comforty). ♦ Jan. 23 at 3:15 and 8:15 and Jan. 24 at 1: “To Live with Terror” (2001, Ton Vriens; in Spanish). ♦ Jan. 23 at 6: “Last Dance” (2002, Mirra Bank). ♦ Jan. 24 at 3:30 and 8:30: “The Komediant” (1999, Arnon Goldfinger; in Hebrew). ♦ Jan. 24 at 6:15: “Strange Fruit” (2001, Joel Katz). ♦ Jan. 25-29: “A Celebration on Film of Guiseppe Verdi.”



Opening January 25, Steve Oedekerk's martial-arts parody, “Kung Pow: Enter the Fist.”

MICHAEL WELDON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Karen D Sims
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JC Jenkins
Joan Moody
Georgette Schweizer
Janice Pearson
Brenda Anderson
Linda Dawson
Kay Oppman
Sharon Marren
Henry Bowden Jr
Cassandra Bradshaw
Mary Berry
Ashley Gordon
Virginia Guffey
Dion Dockery
Jack Brown
Ryan Murphy
Todd Miller
Pamela Morrison
Barbara Johnson
Corey Packett
Doris Leach
Mary Kay Wilson
Lauren De Silva
Nicolas Coleman
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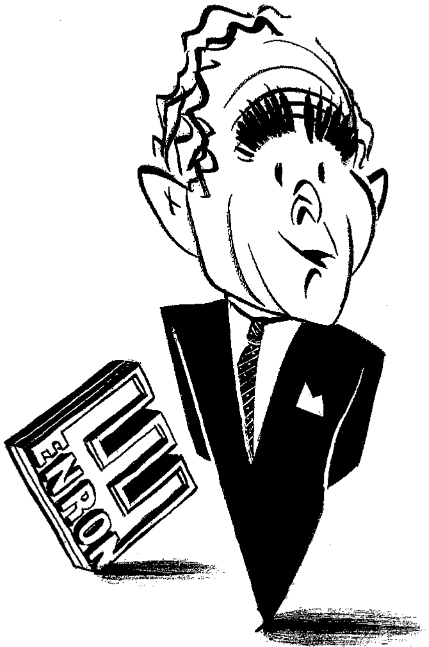
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
SOFT MONEY, HARD LESSON

The Bush Administration's reputation for never letting the outside world know what it's thinking is well deserved, but it's a safe bet that last week it was feeling wronged about Enron. The White House announced—that's announced, not concealed—that Kenneth Lay and other Enron brass had phoned two Cabinet secretaries and one under-secretary in October, as the company was starting its death rattle. As a reward for this candor, Washington went on full scandal alert, with the press and Congress demanding to be told who in the Administration knew what when and what they did about it. The problem with this line of attack is that when Enron got to the point of *really* needing some influence, it discovered that it hadn't bought any after all: the officials the company called evidently did nothing, and they seem to have made a point of not telling President Bush about the calls for more than two months, by which time it was too late to help. Another line of attack was on the opposite ground: that the Administration, in the words of Representative Henry Waxman, Democrat of California, "did nothing to protect innocent employees and shareholders who ultimately lost their life savings." But if the Administration had swerved to avoid Charge No. 2 (doing too little) it would have crashed head on into Charge No. 1 (doing too much).

Let's say the Administration had wanted to help Enron. What could it have done? It had three options. First, it could have asked Congress to pass legislation on the model of the Chrysler bailout of 1979 or last fall's airline bailout. Second, it could have tried to persuade the Federal Reserve Board to invoke an obscure provision of its charter, under which, in extraordinary circumstances, the Fed is permitted to lend any entity any amount of money on any terms, if five of its seven governors O.K. it. Third, it could have tried to persuade Enron's major creditors to give the company a little more time—what's known in the trade as "moral suasion." The Clinton Administration did this during the South Korean financial crisis of 1998 and, just before it left office, in the California energy crisis. Moral suasion was certainly within the capacity of the Bush Administration, since the person handling most of the save-Enron calls, Peter Fisher, the Under-Secretary of the Treasury for Domestic Finance, helped run another such effort by the federal government in 1998, when Long-Term Capital Management was going under and Fisher, then at the New York branch of the Federal Reserve, helped talk its bankers into bailing it out.



The Bush Administration had to have known that Enron was in big trouble before the first calls came in, on October 26th. By then, Enron's president, Jeffrey Skilling, had resigned, the company had announced a $1.2-billion writeoff, the S.E.C. was investigating, and its stock was tanking. Every Administration has people whose job it is to track which important institutions might be in financial danger, and then to determine whether those institutions have the potential to take down large portions of the financial system. Long-Term Capital was rescued because its failure might have caused the collapse of two of its big lenders, Bankers Trust and Lehman Brothers, and who knows

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

what other banks. In Enron's case, the Administration apparently investigated and concluded that it would be a standalone failure.

But let's say the Treasury had concluded that moral suasion was called for—or, at least, that the Bush Administration had wanted to try to save the pensions, if not the jobs, of the employees of a big company in the boss's home state. Would that have been such a bad thing? Capitalism requires the possibility of failure, but what's the point of power if you can't use it for a good deed like buying Enron's employees a month to diversify their pension plans? It's pretty clear that the reason the Administration didn't act is that it was so deeply and widely enmeshed with Enron financially that anything it did would have looked like payback. If, indeed, nobody told Bush that Enron was teetering, that demonstrates not only his usual low level of interest in the details of government but also, and mainly, the desire of the people around him to wall him off from Enron's failure. When Kenneth Lay, Enron's chairman, talked to Donald Evans, the Secretary of Commerce, on October 29th, he was probably trying to get a message to Bush. (Evans is a close friend of Bush's, and, as Bush's campaign chairman, he has reason to remember Lay's generosity.) That Evans doesn't seem to have passed the message on shows that he wanted to give Bush's spokespeople the ability to say, as they have now said, that the President had no idea Enron was in trouble. But should the public really be happy that Bush was kept in the dark about the impending collapse of the nation's seventh-largest corporation? Wouldn't he have been told if the collapse had been that of an equally big company that wasn't so chummy with his Administration?

Once all the fuss has died down—Congress is currently planning ten separate inquiries—two good things will probably have come out of the Enron mess. Companies will no longer be allowed to use their pension programs to treat their employees as an especially loyal and malleable class of shareholder; instead, pension funds will have to be diversified. And accounting firms will no longer be allowed to act as paid consultants to the companies they audit, as Arthur Andersen did with Enron. Congress should add a third item to the agenda (because the Administration surely won't): campaign-finance reform. The political system cannot deal cleanly with a company that makes such an enormous investment in a particular set of politicians. For the Bush Administration, Enron's prior largesse meant that its failure became a problem of reputation management—of avoiding Enrongate—and not of governance.

—Nicholas Lemann

SECRET SHAME DEPT.
THE LICE LADY

Although she declines to use the title, Abigail F. Rosenfeld, a thirty-five-year-old Borough Park mother of ten, is a nitpicker of extreme, if secret, renown. Her business card puts it bluntly:

Lice Consultant
Heads Checked & Cleaned
Total Clean-outs, usually in less than an hour
Satisfaction Guaranteed

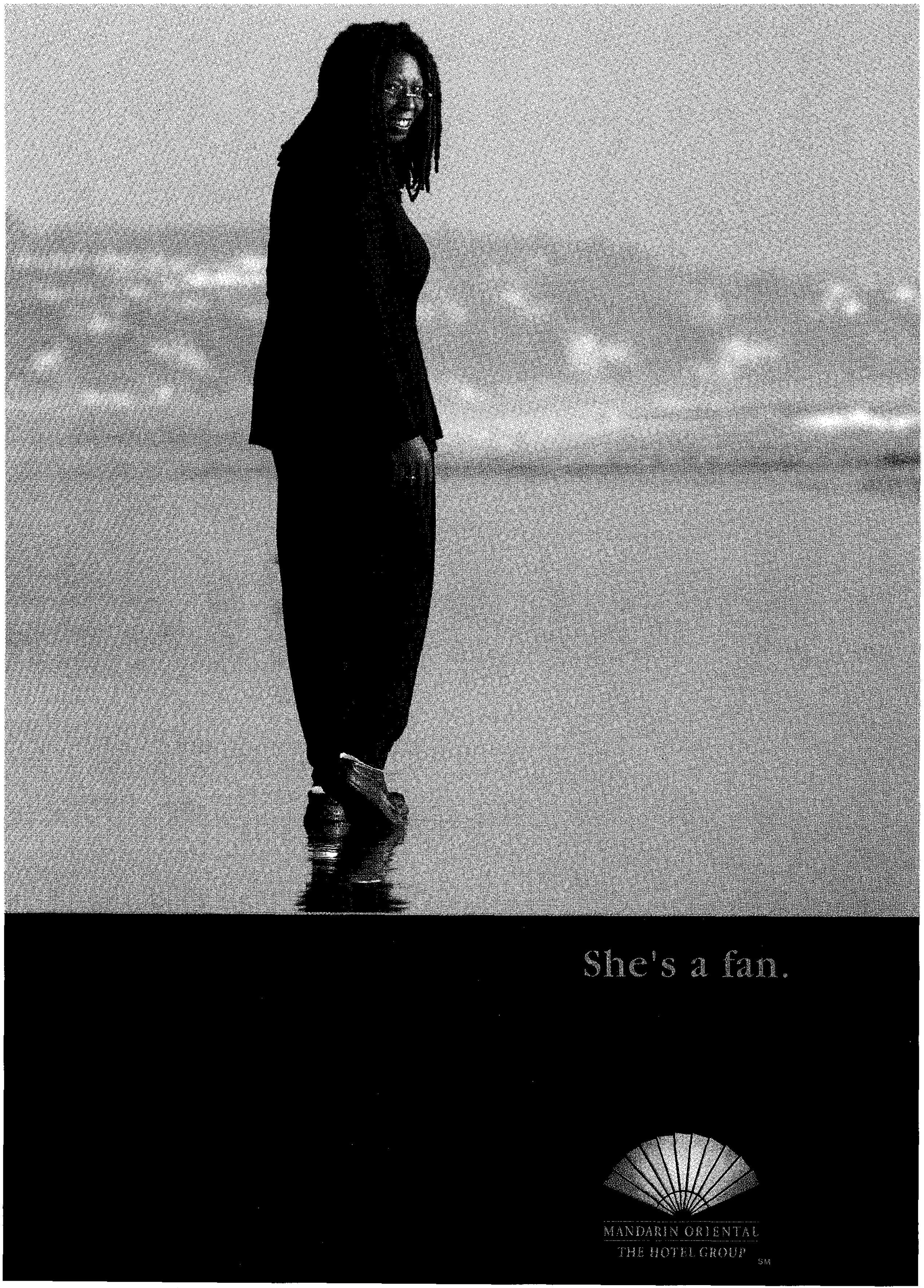
Mrs. Rosenfeld is well known to the city's public- and private-school nurses, who, after sending lice-ridden children home, pass her phone number on to the shocked, enraged, or embarrassed parents of the infested. She always takes them in.

Mrs. Rosenfeld

"People get desperate and do crazy things," Mrs. Rosenfeld explained one recent Sunday afternoon at her home. Wearing a floor-length black velour housecoat with gold-trimmed sleeves, she cut a benevolent, slightly Merlin-like figure. "I had one father of a two-year-old and a four-year-old walk in, very angry, saying, 'Everything on them has *gotta* be dead, because my wife just sprayed them with Raid!' Then I get the mothers who are using kerosene, Vaseline, mayonnaise, or margarine. The other night, I had a family who arrived at ten o'clock, soaked in olive oil, with garbage bags over their heads! Can you imagine trying to sleep with olive oil running down your face?"

Mrs. Rosenfeld, who is pregnant with her eleventh child, has battled lice, or *Pediculus humanus capitis*, for more than half her life. The eldest girl in a family of nine children, she was taught by a school nurse to recognize lice and developed her own method of combing out the insects and their eggs, or nits. She spent years helping her mother by combing out her siblings. Now she charges twenty-five to sixty dollars per head, depending upon the amount of work involved, and donates her services to the needy. Business is as steady as the pest is ubiquitous. "I don't work Shabbas, but I do maybe seventy-five heads a month," she said. "Last night, I had six, five of them boys, which is rare. The father had practically no hair, so I don't know how he got lice, but he did."

Mrs. Rosenfeld's uncanny ability to see the microscopic nits and her rock-steady bedside manner form the basis of her legend. Her removal method distinguishes itself from run-of-the-mill nitpicking in that she does not strip nits off individual hair shafts. Instead, she immobilizes the lice and loosens their eggs' grip on the hair with great dollops of ordinary hair conditioner. (She resolutely refuses to use Nix, Rid, Lidane, or other chemical remedies.) She then works a special German-made comb through the hair. Such is her confidence in herding and killing lice that she doesn't even use rubber gloves. "Gloves pull kids' hair," she said. "If you want to get a job done, you got to be gentle."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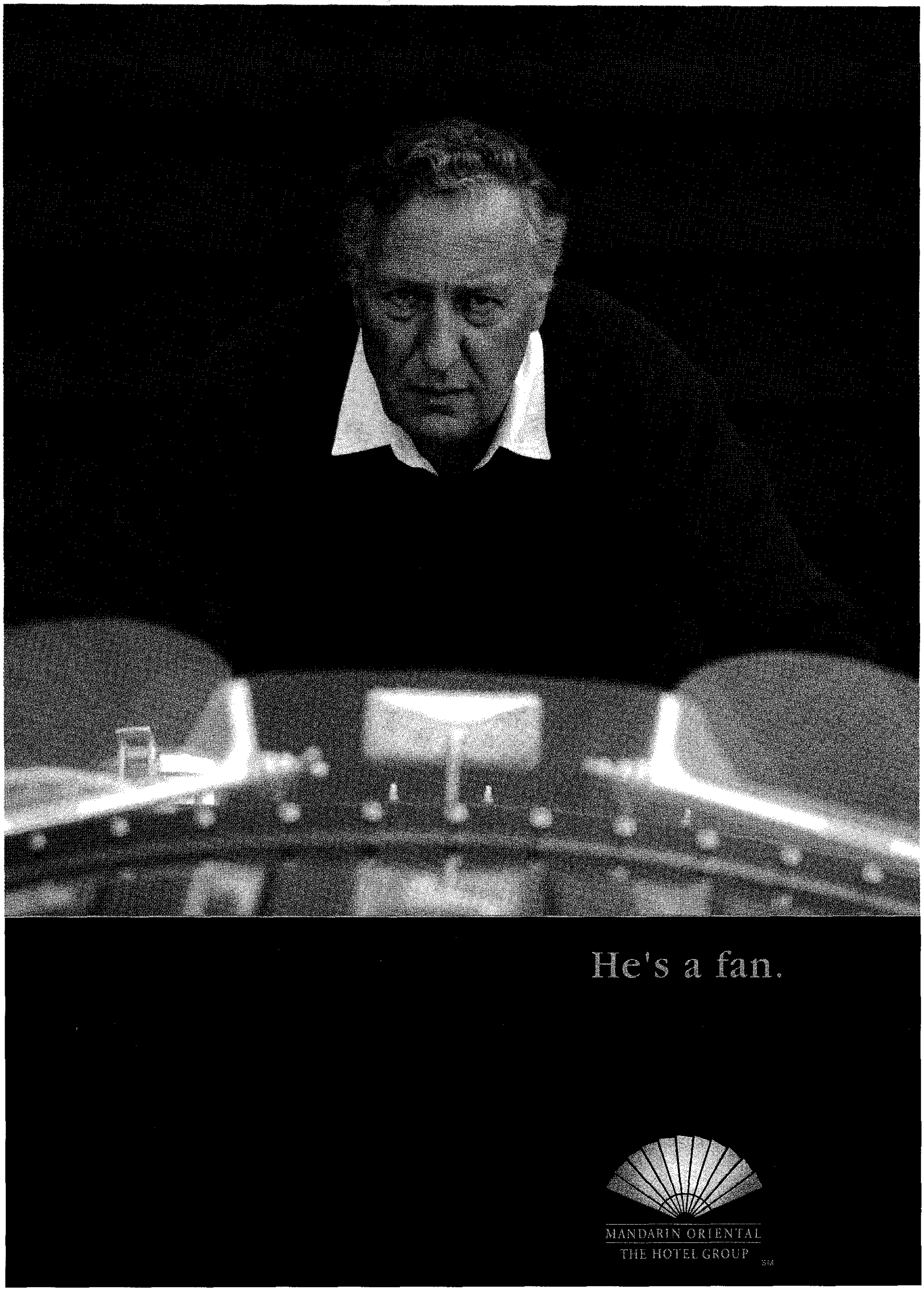
He's a fan.
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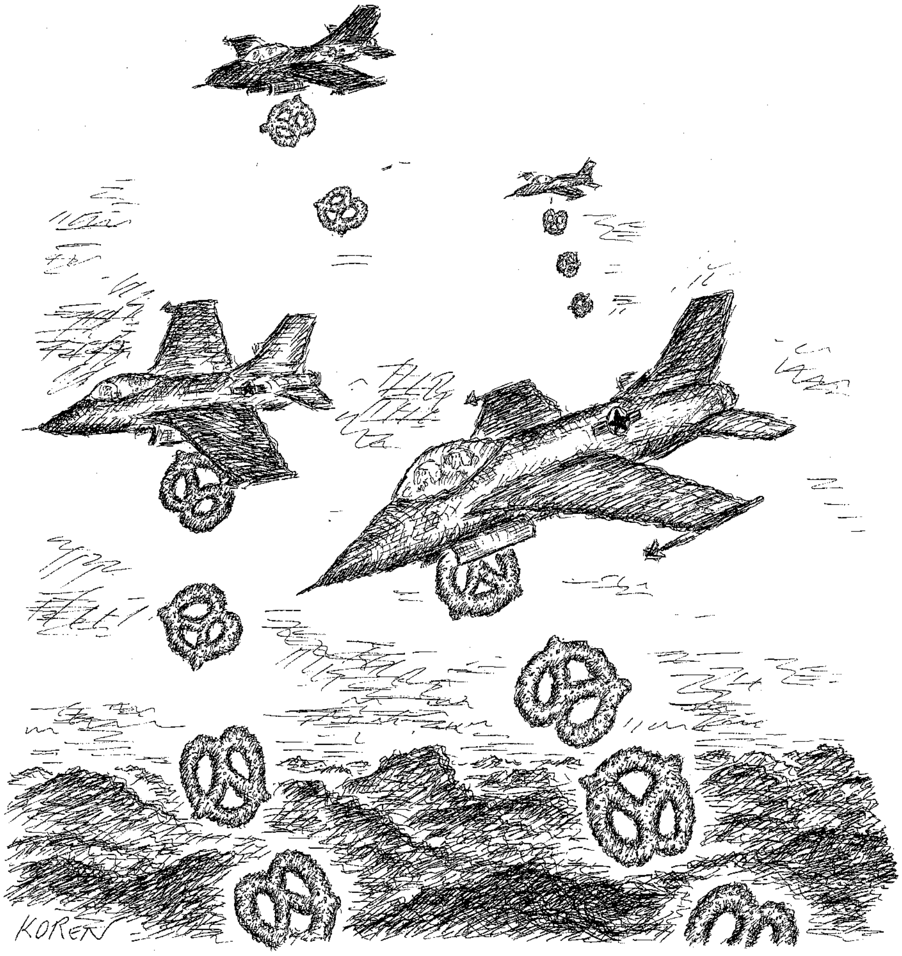
Mrs. Rosenfeld doesn’t discuss the identities of her clients or the institutions in which they contract lice, but infestations are common in the city’s public and private schools. A pernicious recent outbreak among fifth and sixth graders at one well-regarded Brooklyn school is thought to have been advanced during a pillow fight at a Cobble Hill sleepover last November. Although the identity of that Patient Zero remains in dispute, a number of the invitees became Rosenfeld clients.

Commonplace or not, the subject of lice makes most parents squirm. “I’m just not comfortable with anything having to do with any of this,” one mother of a Rosenfeld client said, as she bustled her freshly combed daughter out the door. Under conditions of anonymity befitting participants in the Federal Witness Protection Program, however, a Brooklyn mother of two recently allowed a reporter to accompany her and her children to Mrs. Rosenfeld’s. The case history: the younger sibling, a seven-year-old girl with flashing black eyes, had been found by the school nurse to have lice. Mrs. Rosenfeld had combed out the girl and her brother. To check the birth cycle of any overlooked eggs, Mrs. Rosenfeld includes a post-comb-out visit as part of the regimen. A few days before that final appointment, the mother found a lone bug on the girl’s head and rushed both children back to Borough Park.

“Not much left in here,” Mrs. Rosenfeld said, as she tenderly inspected the girl’s scalp by parting the hair with the tip of a colored pencil. Meanwhile, her one-year-old son, Menachem, and his brothers Shimon, four, and Reuven, six, poured a box of Alpha Bits on the floor. Avroham, who is eight, performed for the young patient by standing on his head atop various counters. “That’s my clown,” said Mrs. Rosenfeld, as she began her work with the conditioner and the comb.

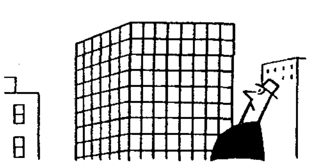
“Here’s a nit,” she said, wiping a blob of conditioner off the comb with a tissue. The ominous, cream-colored egg was the size of a pinprick. The phone rang. When Mrs. Rosenfeld answered, strident, unintelligible sounds issued from the receiver. She waited for the bleating to stop, then said, “I’d love to see you tonight.”



She hung up and resumed combing. “I’ve got a family coming from New Jersey,” she announced with a beatific shrug. “They just called from the George Washington Bridge.”

—*Guy Martin*

ONE SIZE FITS ALL DEPT.
A MORGAN STANLEY SUNRISE, A LEHMAN BROTHERS MOON



When Morgan Stanley sold Lehman Brothers its new glass tower at 745 Seventh Avenue, just north of Times Square, last fall, there wasn’t much for the new owner to do except switch the name above the door. What works for one mega financial firm pretty much works for another. That principle applies even to the building’s most conspicuous feature, a two-and-a-half-story-high electronic sign. The Morgan Stanley sign, which is now the Lehman Brothers sign, is a generation ahead of such high-voltage Times Square showpieces as the cylindrical Nasdaq sign on the Condé Nast Building, the ABC news ticker and television screen at 1500 Broadway, and the series of tall screens jutting out from the new Reuters Building.

The Lehman Brothers sign doesn’t stick out or cover up the building. It *is* the building, or, at least, the base of the building. Three horizontal strips of screen run across the façade, from Forty-ninth to Fiftieth Street, and there is a larger central panel above the entrance, like an electronic bas-relief. The sign was designed not by Artkraft Strauss, the company that has more or less owned the Times Square sign market for generations, but by Imaginary Forces, which isn’t really in the sign business at all. Imaginary Forces is best known for doing title sequences for films such as “Harry Potter” and “Band of Brothers” and for producing short films that are designed to rev up the crowds before Rangers and Knicks games at Madison Square Garden.

One of the architects of 745 Seventh Avenue, Kevin Kennon, brought in Imaginary Forces to do the sign. "It wasn't just slapped onto the building—it is a layer of the architecture," said Mikon van Gastel, who was in charge of the project for Imaginary Forces. Van Gastel, a Dutchman with dyed-blond hair, said he had been inspired by the colored lights on top of the Empire State Building. He wanted to use technology, he said, to create a series of images that would constantly change the façade's appearance. "It's structured like television, with themes, interstitials, transitions," he said.

If you design title sequences for a living, you become an expert at finding simple visual symbols that convey complex messages quickly, and that is what Imaginary Forces tried to do here. "People walk by for ten seconds or pass in a cab for three seconds," van Gastel said. "It has to be a nonlinear story."

Morgan Stanley envisioned the sign as a chance to polish its reputation, so van Gastel proposed a series of images on various themes—sunrises, piggy banks, globes, traders at work—that would swirl and zip and zoom all the time. "We wanted it to show the heart of Morgan Stanley, not the rational side—to be like an X-ray into the building," van Gastel said.

There was a sequence of bridges, presumably to remind passersby that Morgan Stanley spans the world, and another of green apples, which may or may not suggest that Morgan Stanley makes things grow. The sunrise sequence runs every morning at six; moons appear in the middle of the night. At times, the sign resembles one of those television commercials that are full of beautiful random images; you are never sure whether the commercial is for a dot-com or a brokerage firm or a headache remedy. Still, the sign is visually stunning, like an IMAX screen in the middle of a Manhattan street, and it all but dematerializes the façade, turning it from an object of glass and metal into a cavalcade of constantly changing colors and shapes. Here, more than anywhere else in Times Square, electronic imagery really does become architecture.

Van Gastel and his colleagues actually prepared a more complex program for the sign than the one that is now running. Originally, there was to have been sound, and words like "reward" and "imagine" and "connect" and "invest" would float intermittently across the screen—to make explicit the link between apples and moons and the work that goes on at Morgan Stanley. But then the sign became the property of Lehman Brothers. Lehman may be in the same business as Morgan Stanley and just as inclined to like bridges and piggy banks, but Lehman asked van Gastel to make some changes anyway. It turns out that it is one thing to take over a building from one of your competitors without renovating it and quite another to take over its advertising. Bill Ahearn, a Lehman spokesman, said that the changes would concern the mood words that float across the screen. "There are certain words that were part of Morgan Stanley's branding that we are going to take out," he said. "And we're adding a few from our branding, but most people won't really notice." Last week, the sign was in abstraction mode—no words or sounds, just the usual apples and globes.

Van Gastel, for his part, is happy to see the sign become more abstract. "You could basically input anything, like just colors, shifting and changing," he said. "It would feel like the building was breathing—the colors could even shift according to how the market was doing."

—*Paul Goldberger*

POSTSCRIPT
BRUCE AND NAOMI BLIVEN

Bruce and Naomi Bliven, who died, within days of each other, earlier this month, were the model of a certain kind of New York couple. He was eighty-five, she was seventy-six. They had been married for fifty-one years, and during most of that time they lived in the same rambling Upper West Side apartment; it was stuffed with books and paintings, many of them by their friends. In the living room, there was a baby-grand piano, always in tune.

The Blivens belonged to that generation who dressed up to go out, even to the office: Bruce in a blazer, white shirt, and dark tie; Naomi in heels and, weather permitting, her fur coat. They went to the theatre, to concerts and the opera, to parties. At home, they read voraciously, and they wrote—both of them, as it happens, for this magazine.

Bruce wrote Profiles and factual articles, on subjects as varied as acoustics and the early marketing of Crest toothpaste. Naomi was one of the mainstays of the Books department, and over the years wrote literally thousands of brief reviews, often turning them in by the fistful, four or five a week. She also contributed hundreds of longer reviews, on every kind of book imaginable: novels, biographies, books on diplomacy and policy, on European and American history, on music and philosophy. She was a polymath but never a showoff; her intelligence was one that, as she wrote of the British philosopher Alan Ryan, "glows rather than glitters" (January 22, 1996), and she tended less to return verdicts than to engage books and their authors in a kind of informal conversation.

Like many bookish city-dwellers, the Blivens were fascinated by nature but had a somewhat distant relation to it, until, well on in her career, Naomi began writing longer reported pieces on natural subjects—on trumpeter swans and on Kaaterskill Falls, to which she had been led by the famous Thomas Cole painting. These pieces were stylish and informative and animated by an almost youthful wonder, as if Naomi had never quite got over that there were parts of the world without sidewalks and libraries.

In Bruce's later years, he was more or less retired, but Naomi was active right until the end, always eager for a new assignment. Even when she began to suffer from ill health, she never complained. If you asked her how she was, she quickly changed the subject to whether you had seen any good tennis lately. By then, tennis had become her other great passion, and she followed it on TV with the same ardor and knowledgeability that she brought to books. If she had to, during Grand Slam events especially, she could read and watch at the same time.

—*Charles McGrath*

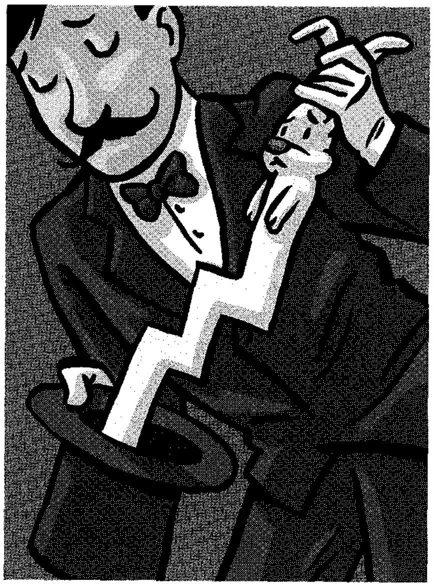
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
BIG MONEY, WEIRD SCIENCE

The way things are going, the question most often asked of corporate C.E.O.s will no longer be "How are you going to boost your stock price?" Instead, it will be "What did you know and when did you know it?" Executives at Enron and at Arthur Andersen have been facing that one for a while, and now executives at ImClone Systems, Inc., a biotech firm based in Tribeca, are, too.

Until December, ImClone Systems was one of the most highly touted biotechnology companies in America, thanks to a cancer-fighting drug called Erbitux. Even while Erbitux was still being tested, ImClone was pitching it as a potential blockbuster that would revolutionize cancer treatment. Wall Street and the business press were sweet on Erbitux as well. In July, *Business Week* put the drug on its cover, and the *Times* called it "the $2 billion molecule." More than half a dozen analysts had "buy" ratings on ImClone. And though the company had never, in seventeen years, brought a drug to market, and had just three million dollars in quarterly revenues (and no profits), ImClone's market capitalization was, at its peak, $5.5 billion. Shareholders included some of the biggest institutional investors around—what the Street likes to call "smart money."

But right now the smart money must be feeling pretty dumb. On December 28th, ImClone announced that the Food and Drug Administration had rejected its Erbitux application. In other words, the agency would not even consider the drug for approval, much less approve it. (The F.D.A. said that ImClone's clinical trials were inadequate and its data insufficient.) The more shocking news came a few days later: apparently, ImClone had known all along that the F.D.A. had serious questions about the way the Erbitux trials were designed and conducted, yet the company, inexplicably, did not heed the F.D.A.'s recommendations, while continuing to project that the drug would be approved by early 2002. The revelations cut the share price in half and provoked a slew of analyst downgrades and shareholder lawsuits. Last week, a congressional committee launched an investigation.

So why did Wall Street blow it? ImClone told the kind of story that the Street loves to hear. A cutting-edge biotech was leading the charge to transform Tribeca into a mini-Cambridge, a regular Genome Alley. The product was hip: Erbitux is what's called a "targeted therapy" drug, and targeted therapy is supposedly the future of cancer treatment. ImClone's board was grand: among the directors were some of the most important people in oncology, including Vincent DeVita, the former head of the National Cancer Institute, and John Mendelsohn, the president of the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, in Houston, who invented Erbitux (and who, oddly enough, is also on the board—and the audit committee—of Enron. "It's a coincidence," he said last week). The renowned oncologist Leonard Saltz supervised the company's clinical trials. Above all, its backers were blue chips: in September, Bristol Myers Squibb bought twenty per cent of ImClone for a billion dollars. "The perception that the F.D.A. was going to accept the drug really increased when Bristol signed on," said Jason Kantor, a biotech analyst at J. P. Morgan Chase, who upgraded ImClone in November, just before the stock plummeted. "Bristol's a smart company, so if you believed in ImClone, as I did, that deal made you feel that you were getting validation from someone who knew what was going on."



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

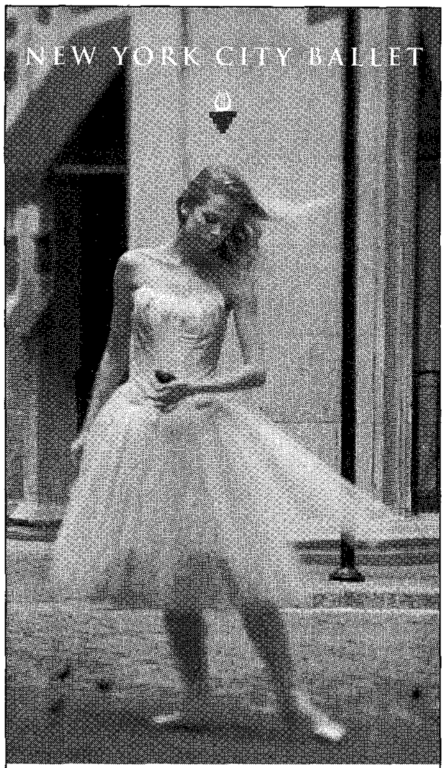
Analysts relied on the validation they got from the big names because they didn't have much else to go on. They couldn't examine ImClone's track record—it had none. They weren't in the lab. They weren't privy to the F.D.A.'s communications. So they looked to the reputational capital of the people who were telling the ImClone story, and that was enough, apparently, to make them far more confident in Erbitux than they should have been. Call it the Planet Hollywood syndrome. Last year, people raised questions about the adequacy of ImClone's drug trials—pointing out problems that were eventually cited by the F.D.A.—but Wall Street discounted such concerns. "When Leonard Saltz is vouching for the data, you believe him," Kantor said.

ImClone also benefitted from the excitement about the new science of targeted therapy. In the right light, ImClone looks like a dot-com: breakthrough technology, a business staked on promise, rather than profits, an inflated stock price, and a willful disregard for the fundamentals. "I'm going to give the ImClone people the benefit of the doubt and say they were incompetent rather than corrupt," Kantor says. "A combination of arrogance and lack of experience did them in."

Let's also give Kantor and his cohorts on the Street the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps they, too, were merely incompetent. That's small consolation for all the hopeful investors who, at their analyst's urging, bought ImClone when it was up around seventy. Clearly, analysts at firms like J. P. Morgan Chase also have plenty of reputational capital, and it doesn't always serve their clients well. Here you had an arrogant, inexperienced biotech company with almost no revenues, pinning its hopes on a drug that no one on Wall Street could effectively evaluate. ("We screwed up," Sam Waksal, the company's C.E.O., has said, helpfully.) You call that a buy?

Mendelsohn and DeVita are prominent scientists, but they also have a professional and financial stake in ImClone's success. Mendelsohn, for example, sold more than six million dollars' worth of stock in October. An imprimatur isn't always what it's cracked up to be. As ImClone's investors learned, to their dismay, reputation is no substitute for knowledge.

—*James Surowiecki*



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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE GETAWAY

Questions surround a secret Pakistani airlift.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

In Afghanistan last November, the Northern Alliance, supported by American Special Forces troops and emboldened by the highly accurate American bombing, forced thousands of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters to retreat inside the northern hill town of Kunduz. Trapped with them were Pakistani Army officers, intelligence advisers, and volunteers who were fighting alongside the Taliban. (Pakistan had been the Taliban's staunchest military and economic supporter in its long-running war against the Northern Alliance.) Many of the fighters had fled earlier defeats at Mazar-i-Sharif, to the west; Taloqan, to the east; and Pul-i-Khumri, to the south. The road to Kabul, a potential point of retreat, was blocked and was targeted by American bombers. Kunduz offered safety from the bombs and a chance to negotiate painless surrender terms, as Afghan tribes often do.

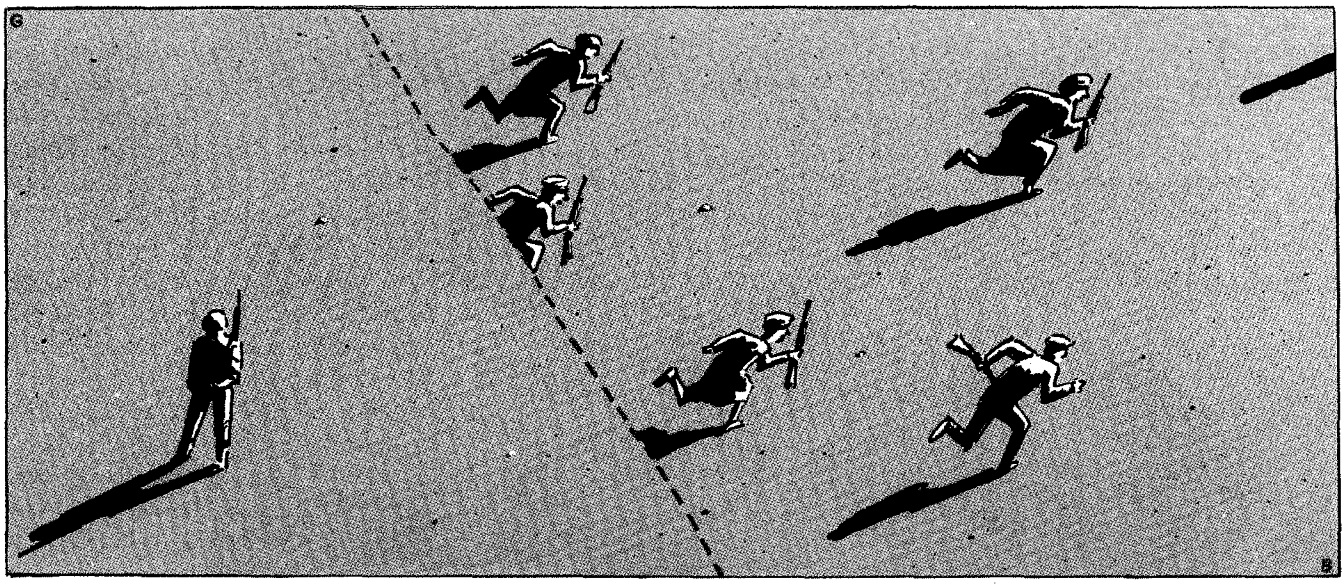
Surrender negotiations began immediately, but the Bush Administration heatedly—and successfully—opposed them. On November 25th, the Northern Alliance took Kunduz, capturing some four thousand of the Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. The next day, President Bush said, "We're smoking them out. They're running, and now we're going to bring them to justice."

Even before the siege ended, however, a puzzling series of reports appeared in the *Times* and in other publications, quoting Northern Alliance officials who claimed that Pakistani airplanes had flown into Kunduz to evacuate the Pakistanis there. American and Pakistani officials refused to confirm the reports. On November 16th, when journalists asked Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about the reports of rescue aircraft, he was dismissive. "Well, if we see them, we shoot them down," he said. Five days later, Rumsfeld declared, "Any idea that those people should be let loose on any basis at all to leave that country and to go bring terror to other countries and destabilize other countries is unacceptable." At a Pentagon news conference on Monday, November 26th, the day after Kunduz fell, General Richard B. Myers, of the Air Force, who is the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked about the reports. The General did not directly answer the question but stated, "The runway there is not usable. I mean, there are segments of it that are usable. They're too short for your standard transport aircraft. So we're not sure where the reports are coming from."

Pakistani officials also debunked the rescue reports, and continued to insist, as they had throughout the Afghanistan war, that no Pakistani military personnel were in the country. Anwar Mehmood, the government spokesman, told newsmen at the time that reports of a Pakistani airlift were "total rubbish. Hogwash."

In interviews, however, American intelligence officials and high-ranking military officers said that Pakistanis were indeed flown to safety, in a series of nighttime airlifts that were approved by the Bush Administration. The Americans also said that what was supposed to be a limited evacuation apparently slipped out of control, and, as an unintended consequence, an unknown number of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters managed to join in the exodus. "Dirt got through the screen," a senior intelligence official told me. Last week, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld did not respond to a request for comment.

Pakistan's leader, General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, had risked his standing with the religious fundamentalists—and perhaps his life—by endorsing the American attack on Afghanistan and the American support of the Northern Alliance. At the time of Kunduz, his decision looked like an especially dangerous one. The initial American aim in Afghanistan had been not to eliminate the Taliban's presence there entirely but to undermine the regime and Al Qaeda while leaving intact so-called moderate Taliban elements that would play a role in a new postwar government. This would insure that Pakistan would not end up with a regime on its border dominated by the Northern Alliance. By mid-November, it was clear that the Northern Alliance would quickly sweep through Afghanistan. There were fears that once the Northern Alliance took Kunduz, there would be wholesale killings of the defeated fighters, especially the foreigners.



"Dirt got through the screen," an American intelligence official said of the Al Qaeda fighters airlifted from Afghanistan.

GUY BILLOUT

Musharraf won American support for the airlift by warning that the humiliation of losing hundreds—and perhaps thousands—of Pakistani Army men and intelligence operatives would jeopardize his political survival. "Clearly, there is a great willingness to help Musharraf," an American intelligence official told me. A C.I.A. analyst said that it was his understanding that the decision to permit the airlift was made by the White House and was indeed driven by a desire to protect the Pakistani leader. The airlift "made sense at the time," the C.I.A. analyst said. "Many of the people they spirited away were the Taliban leadership"—who Pakistan hoped could play a role in a postwar Afghan government. According to this person, "Musharraf wanted to have these people to put another card on the table" in future political negotiations. "We were supposed to have access to them," he said, but "it didn't happen," and the rescued Taliban remain unavailable to American intelligence.

According to a former high-level American defense official, the airlift was approved because of representations by the Pakistanis that "there were guys—intelligence agents and underground guys—who needed to get out."

Once under way, a senior American defense adviser said, the airlift became chaotic. "Everyone brought their friends with them," he said, referring to the Afghans with whom the Pakistanis had worked, and whom they had trained or had used to run intelligence operations. "You're not going to leave them behind to get their throats cut." Recalling the last-minute American evacuation at the end of the Vietnam War, in 1975, the adviser added, "When we came out of Saigon, we brought our boys with us." He meant South Vietnamese nationals. " 'How many does that helicopter hold? Ten? We're bringing fourteen.' "

The Bush Administration may have done more than simply acquiesce in the rescue effort: at the height of the standoff, according to both a C.I.A. official and a military analyst who has worked with the Delta Force, the American commando unit that was destroying Taliban units on the ground, the Administration ordered the United States Central Command to set up a special air corridor to help insure the safety of the Pakistani rescue flights from Kunduz to the northwest corner of Pakistan, about two hundred miles away. The order left some members of the Delta Force deeply frustrated. "These guys did Desert Storm and Mogadishu," the military analyst said. "They see things in black-and-white. 'Unhappy' is not the word. They're supposed to be killing people." The airlift also angered the Northern Alliance, whose leadership, according to Reuel Gerecht, a former Near East operative for the C.I.A., had sought unsuccessfully for years to "get people to pay attention to the Pakistani element" among the Taliban. The Northern Alliance was eager to capture "mainline Pakistani military and intelligence officers" at Kunduz, Gerecht said. "When the rescue flights started, it touched a raw nerve."

Just as Pakistan has supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan's archrival India has supported the Northern Alliance. Operatives in India's main external intelligence unit—known as RAW, for Research and Analysis Wing—reported extensively on the Pakistani airlift out of Kunduz. (The Taliban and Al Qaeda have declared the elimination of India's presence in the contested territory of Kashmir as a major goal.) RAW has excellent access to the Northern Alliance and a highly sophisticated ability to intercept electronic communications. An Indian military adviser boasted that when the airlift began "we knew within minutes." In interviews in New Delhi, Indian national-security and intelligence officials repeatedly declared that the airlift had rescued not only members of the Pakistani military but Pakistani citizens who had volunteered to fight against the Northern Alliance, as well as non-Pakistani Taliban and Al Qaeda. Brajesh Mishra, India's national-security adviser, said his government had concluded that five thousand Pakistanis and Taliban—he called it "a ballpark figure"—had been rescued.

According to RAW's senior analyst for Pakistani and Afghan issues, the most extensive rescue efforts took place on three nights at the time of the fall of Kunduz. Indian intelligence had concluded that eight thousand or more men were trapped inside the city in the last days of the siege, roughly half of whom were Pakistanis. (Afghans, Uzbeks, Chechens, and various Arab mercenaries accounted for the rest.) At least five flights were specifically "confirmed" by India's informants, the RAW analyst told me, and many more were believed to have taken place.

In the Indian assessment, thirty-three hundred prisoners surrendered to a Northern Alliance tribal faction headed by General Abdul Rashid Dostum. A few hundred Taliban were also turned over to other tribal leaders. That left between four and five thousand men unaccounted for. "Where are the balance?" the intelligence officer asked. According to him, two Pakistani Army generals were on the flights.

None of the American intelligence officials I spoke with were able to say with certainty how many Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters were flown to safety, or may have escaped from Kunduz by other means.

India, wary of antagonizing the Bush Administration, chose not to denounce the airlift at the time. But there was a great deal of anger within the Indian government. "We had all the information, but we did not go public," the Indian military adviser told me. "Why should we embarrass you? We should be sensible." A RAW official said that India had intelligence that Musharraf's message to the Americans had been that he didn't want to see body bags coming back to Pakistan. Brajesh Mishra told me that diplomatic notes protesting the airlift were sent to Britain and the United States. Neither responded, he said.

"But if I say I'm in denial then, by definition, I'm not in denial."

Mishra also said that Indian intelligence was convinced that many of the airlifted fighters would soon be infiltrated into Kashmir. There was a precedent for this. In the past, the Pakistani Army's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (I.S.I.) had trained fighters in Afghanistan and then funnelled them into Kashmir. One of India's most senior intelligence officials also told me, "Musharraf can't afford to keep the Taliban in Pakistan. They're dangerous to his own regime. Our reading is that the fighters can go only to Kashmir."

Kashmir, on India's northern border, is a predominantly Muslim territory that has been fiercely disputed since Partition, in 1947. Both India and Pakistan have waged war to support their claim. Pakistanis believe that Kashmir should have become part of their country in the first place, and that India reneged on the promise of a plebiscite to determine its future. India argues that a claim to the territory on religious grounds is a threat to India's status as a secular, multi-ethnic nation. Kashmir is now divided along a carefully drawn line of control, but cross-border incursions—many of them bloody—occur daily.

Three weeks after the airlift, on December 13th, a suicide squad of five heavily armed Muslim terrorists drove past a barrier at the Indian Parliament, in New Delhi, and rushed the main building. At one point, the terrorists were only a few feet from the steps to the office of India's Vice-President, Krishan Kant. Nine people were killed in the shoot-out, in addition to the terrorists, and many others were injured. The country's politicians and the press felt that a far greater tragedy had only narrowly been averted.

In India, the Parliament assault was regarded as comparable to September 11th. Indian intelligence quickly concluded that the attack had been organized by operatives from two long-standing Kashmiri terrorist organizations that were believed to be heavily supported by the I.S.I.

Brajesh Mishra told me that if the attack on the Parliament had resulted in a more significant number of casualties "there would have been mayhem." India deployed hundreds of thousands of troops along its border with Pakistan, and publicly demanded that Musharraf take steps to cut off Pakistani support for the groups said to be involved. "Nobody in India wants war, but other options are not ruled out," Mishra said.

The crisis escalated, with military men on both sides declaring that they were prepared to face nuclear war, if necessary. Last week, Colin Powell, the Secretary of State, travelled to the region and urged both sides to withdraw their troops, cool the rhetoric, and begin constructive talks about Kashmir.

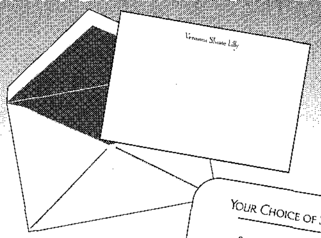
Under prodding from the Bush Administration, Musharraf has taken action against his country's fundamentalist terror organizations. In the last month, the government has made more than a thousand arrests, seized bank accounts, and ordered the I.S.I. to stop all support for terrorist groups operating inside Kashmir. In a televised address to the nation on January 12th, Musharraf called for an end to terrorism, but he also went beyond the most recent dispute with India and outlined a far-reaching vision of Pakistan as a modern state. "The day of reckoning has come," he said. "Do we want Pakistan to become a theocratic state? Do we believe that religious education alone is enough for governance? Or do we want Pakistan to emerge as a progressive and dynamic Islamic welfare state?" The fundamentalists, he added, "did nothing except contribute to bloodshed in Afghanistan. I ask of them whether they know anything other than disruption and sowing seeds of hatred. Does Islam preach this?"

"Musharraf has not done as much as the Indians want," a Bush Administration official who is deeply involved in South Asian issues said. "But he's done more than I'd thought he'd do. He had to do something, because the Indians are so wound up." The official also said, however, that Musharraf could not last in office if he conceded the issue of Kashmir to India, and would not want to do so in any case. "He is not a fundamentalist but a Pakistani nationalist—he genuinely believes that Kashmir 'should be ours.' At the end of the day, Musharraf would come out ahead if he could get rid of the Pakistani and Kashmiri terrorists—if he can survive it. They have eaten the vitals out of Pakistan." In his address, Musharraf was unyielding on that subject. "Kashmir runs in our blood," he said. "No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. . . . We will never budge an inch from our principled stand on Kashmir."

Milton Bearden, a former C.I.A. station chief in Pakistan who helped run the Afghan war against the Soviet Union in the late nineteen-eighties and worked closely with the I.S.I., believes that the Indian government is cynically using the Parliament bombing to rally public support for the conflict with Pakistan. "The Indians are just playing brinkmanship now—moving troops up to the border," he said. "Until September 11th, they thought they'd won this thing—they had Pakistan on the ropes." Because of its nuclear program, he said, "Pakistan was isolated and sanctioned by the United States, with only China left as an ally. Never mind that the only country in South Asia that always did what we asked was Pakistan." As for Musharraf, Bearden said, "What can he do? Does he really have the Army behind him? Yes, but maybe by only forty-eight to fifty-two per cent." Bearden went on, "Musharraf is not going to be a Kemal Atatürk"—the founder of the secular Turkish state—"but as long as he can look over his shoulder and see that Rich Armitage"—the United States Deputy Secretary of State—"and Don Rumsfeld are with him he might be able to stop the extremism."

A senior Pakistani diplomat depicted India as suffering from "jilted-lover syndrome"—referring to the enormous amount of American attention and financial aid that the Musharraf government has received since September 11th. "The situation is bloody explosive," the diplomat said, and argued that Musharraf has not been given enough credit from the Indian leadership for the "sweeping changes" that have taken place in Pakistan. "Short of saying it is now a secular Pakistan, he's redefined and changed the politics of the regime," the diplomat said. "He has delegitimized religious fundamentalism." The diplomat told me that the critical question for Pakistan, India, and the rest of South Asia is "Will the Americans stay involved for the long haul, or will attention shift to Somalia or Iraq? I don't know."

Inevitably, any conversation about tension between India and Pakistan turns to the issue of nuclear weapons. Both countries have warheads and the means to deliver them. (India's capabilities, con-



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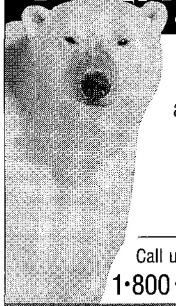

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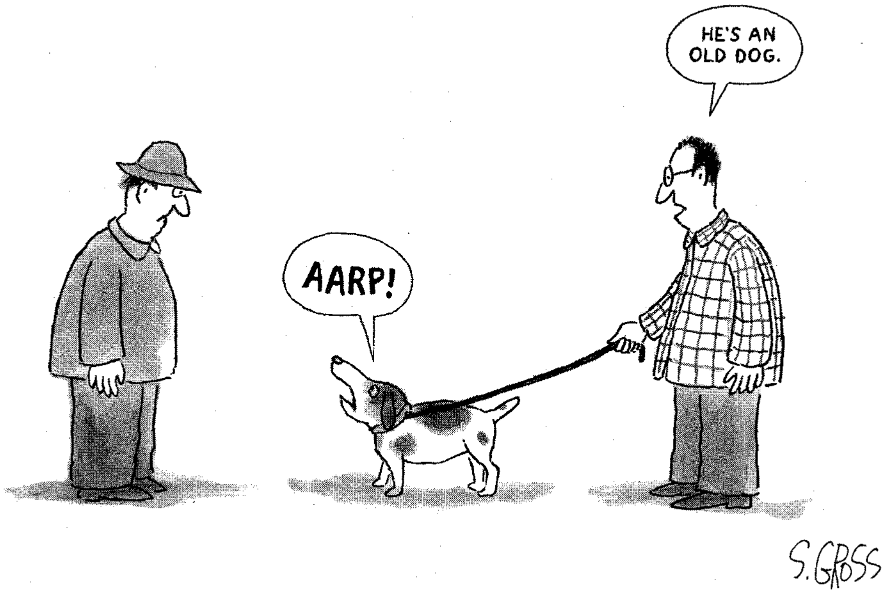
HE'S AN OLD DOG.
AARP!
S. GROSS

ventional and nuclear, are far greater—between sixty and ninety warheads—while Pakistan is thought to have between thirty and fifty.) A retired C.I.A. officer who served as station chief in South Asia told me that what he found disturbing was the "imperfect intelligence" each country has as to what the other side's intentions are. "Couple that with the fact that these guys have a propensity to believe the worst of each other, *and* have nuclear weapons, and you end up saying, 'My God, get me the hell out of here.' " Milton Bearden agreed that the I.S.I. and RAW are "equally bad" at assessing each other.

In New Delhi, I got a sense of how dangerous the situation is, in a conversation with an Indian diplomat who has worked at the highest levels of his country's government. He told me that he believes India could begin a war with Pakistan and not face a possible nuclear retaliation. He explained, "When Pakistan went nuclear, we called their bluff." He was referring to a tense moment in 1990, when India moved its Army en masse along the Pakistani border and then sat back while the United States mediated a withdrawal. "We found, through intelligence, that there was a lot of bluster." He and others in India concluded that Pakistan was not willing to begin a nuclear confrontation. "We've found there is a lot of strategic space between a low-intensity war waged with Pakistan and the nuclear threshold," the diplomat said. "Therefore, we are utilizing military options without worrying about the nuclear threshold." If that turned out to be a miscalculation and Pakistan initiated the use of nuclear weapons, he said, then India would respond in force. "And Pakistan would cease to exist."

The Bush Administration official involved in South Asian issues acknowledged that there are some people in India who seem willing to gamble that "you can have war but not use nuclear weapons." He added, "Both nations need to sit down and work out the red lines"—the points of no return. "They've never done that."

An American intelligence official told me that the Musharraf regime had added to the precariousness of the military standoff with India by reducing the amount of time it would take for Pakistan to execute a nuclear strike. Pakistan keeps control over its nuclear arsenal in part by storing its warheads separately from its missile- and aircraft-delivery systems. In recent weeks, he said, the time it takes to get the warheads in the air has been cut to just three hours—"and that's too close. Both sides have their nukes in place and ready to roll."

Even before the airlift from Kunduz, the Indians were enraged by the Bush Administration's decision to make Pakistan its chief ally in the Afghanistan war. "Musharraf has two-timed you," a recently retired senior member of India's diplomatic service told me in New Delhi earlier this month. "What have you gained? Have you captured Osama bin Laden?" He said that although India would do nothing to upset the American campaign in Afghanistan, "We will turn the heat on Musharraf. He'll go back to terrorism as long as the heat is off." (Milt Bearden scoffed at that characterization. "Musharraf doesn't have time to two-time anybody," he said. "He wakes up every morning and has to head out with his bayonet, trying to find the land mines.")

Some C.I.A. analysts believe that bin Laden eluded American capture inside Afghanistan with help from elements of the Pakistani intelligence service. "The game against bin Laden is not over," one analyst told me in early January. He speculated that bin Laden could be on his way to Somalia, "his best single place to hide." Al Qaeda is known to have an extensive infrastructure there. The analyst said that he had concluded that "he's out. We've been looking for bombing targets for weeks and weeks there but can't identify them."

Last week, Donald Rumsfeld told journalists that he believed bin Laden was still in Afghanistan. Two days later, in Pakistan, Musharraf announced that he thought bin Laden was probably dead—of kidney disease.

A senior C.I.A. official, when asked for comment, cautioned that there were a variety of competing assessments inside the agency as to bin Laden's whereabouts. "We really don't know," he said. "We'll get him, but anybody who tells you we *know* where he is is full of it."

India's grievances—over the Pakistani airlift, the continuing terrorism in Kashmir, and Musharraf's new status with Washington—however heartfelt, may mean little when it comes to effecting a dramatic change of American policy in South Asia. India's democracy and its tradition of civilian control over the military make it less of a foreign-policy priority than Pakistan. The Bush Administration has put its prestige, and American aid money, behind Musharraf, in the gamble—thus far successful—that he will continue to move Pakistan, and its nuclear arsenal, away from fundamentalism. The goal is to stop nuclear terrorism as well as political terrorism. It's a tall order, and missteps are inevitable. Nonetheless, the White House remains optimistic. An Administration official told me that, given the complications of today's politics, he still believed that Musharraf was the best Pakistani leader the Indians could hope for, whether they recognize it or not. "After him, they could only get something worse." ♦

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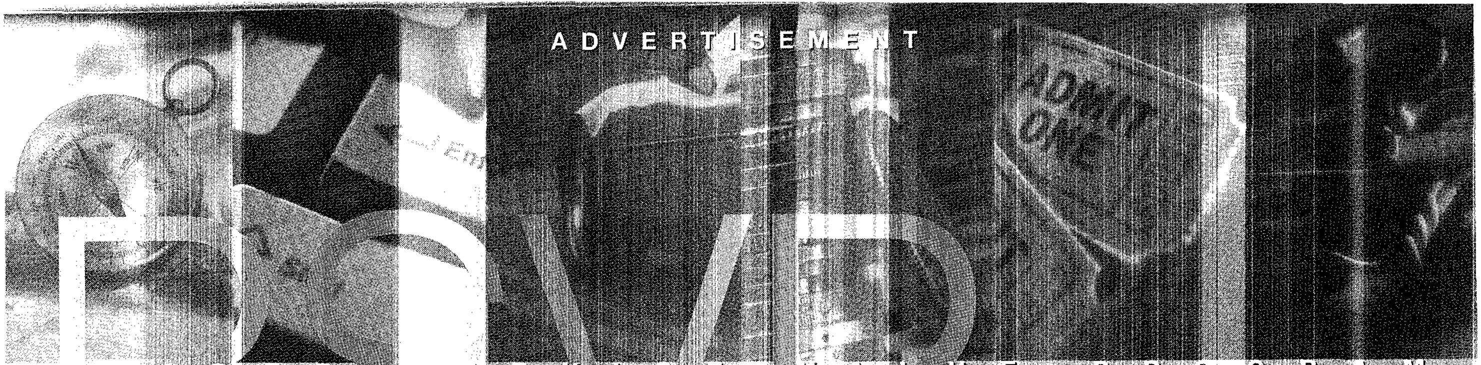

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

HOW TO LAY OFF YOUR KIDS

BY CARINA CHOCANO

Household budget cutbacks, loss of primary parental income, excessive consumer debt, and other events that may result in the layoff of children can create stress for both parents and their offspring. But child layoffs need not be harrowing experiences. If handled tactfully, they can be conducted in a sensitive and professional manner, minimizing the risk of an unpleasant aftermath.

A preliminary notification of an anticipated reduction in family personnel can help reduce stress and increase morale as final layoff decisions are made. That said, parents should take care not to let information leak out prematurely, as this could result in unwarranted daylong tantrums and protracted retention of breath, particularly in those who cannot tie their own shoes. The following sample may be used to introduce children to the possibility of a layoff.

To: The (FAMILY NAME) children

We have been analyzing our family's budgetary situation over the past few months and are making decisions about how we will cope with a current revenue shortfall. Consequently, there will be a great deal of discussion around the house in the coming weeks about what measures will be undertaken to safeguard the future of our family. There may also be some screaming. We would like to assure you that the situation is temporary and that we have reason to be optimistic.

One way to cope with a revenue shortfall is to reduce the number of our dependents, i.e., you kids. After careful consideration, it appears that some of the positions you currently occupy will have to be eliminated. This is a painful process for everyone involved, and we hope you will remember in the weeks ahead that this hurts us more than it hurts you. We want to assure all of you that Mom(my) and Dad(dy) love you very much, and that we will conduct a thorough review of your contributions to the family before our final decisions are made.

We hope you will feel free to communicate openly any questions you may have. Your coöperation and understanding during this difficult time are greatly appreciated.

Love,
Mom(my) and Dad(dy)

PRE-LAYOFF STEPS

Many parents fail to prepare adequately for the termination meeting, only to be bombarded with questions, demands, and pleas that they are not ready to respond to. Following is a list of concerns that parents may be called upon to address when meeting with these small and often immature individuals.

—"Why me, Mommy?" Parents must establish a documented, justifiable reason for the layoff of a child. Eliminating a position (i.e., middle child) as a pretext for replacing one child with another of a different name could result in litigation.

—"What about my allowance?" The law does not require parents to pay severance to terminated children, but many parents consider it a sound practice. Two weeks' allowance is the norm for a middle-class family of five.

—"I'm going to throw up, Daddy!" Most states require parents to provide their laid-off children with some kind of health-insurance plan that will allow them to continue (at their own expense and for a finite period of time) the same medical plan they had while they were family members. Your insurance provider can give you information and forms.

WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW

Most experts recommend terminating children first thing in the morning, while they are still groggy. If you are laying off just one child, consider firing him or her off-site, to spare the child additional embarrassment within the family. The mall is an ideal place to lay off a child. If your child cries, stomps, or throws himself or herself on the floor, he or she will most likely blend into the crowd. Before concluding the meeting, arrange a time when the child can come home and clean out his or her room.

When letting a child go, a face-to-face meeting is recommended so that the parent can celebrate the youngster as a unique individual and also provide firsthand, personalized information about the layoff process. This information may include notification about last-minute chores required of the child before he or she leaves the premises. Be gentle but firm. Should the child become petulant, settle the matter with a resolute "This is not a discussion."

Remember, terminated children aren't the only ones who have a hard time with layoffs. Siblings whose positions in the family have been spared often feel jittery in the aftermath of a personnel reduction. Use the occasion as an opportunity to cement family loyalty and to encourage forward-looking attitudes. Taking the remaining child or children out for ice cream should do the trick.

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE NOTIFICATION OF TERMINATION

Parents can prepare a child for the big news by supplying him or her with a written notice of termination before scheduling a meeting to discuss procedures and complete the paperwork. The following sample letter may be placed by the child's cereal early in the morning.

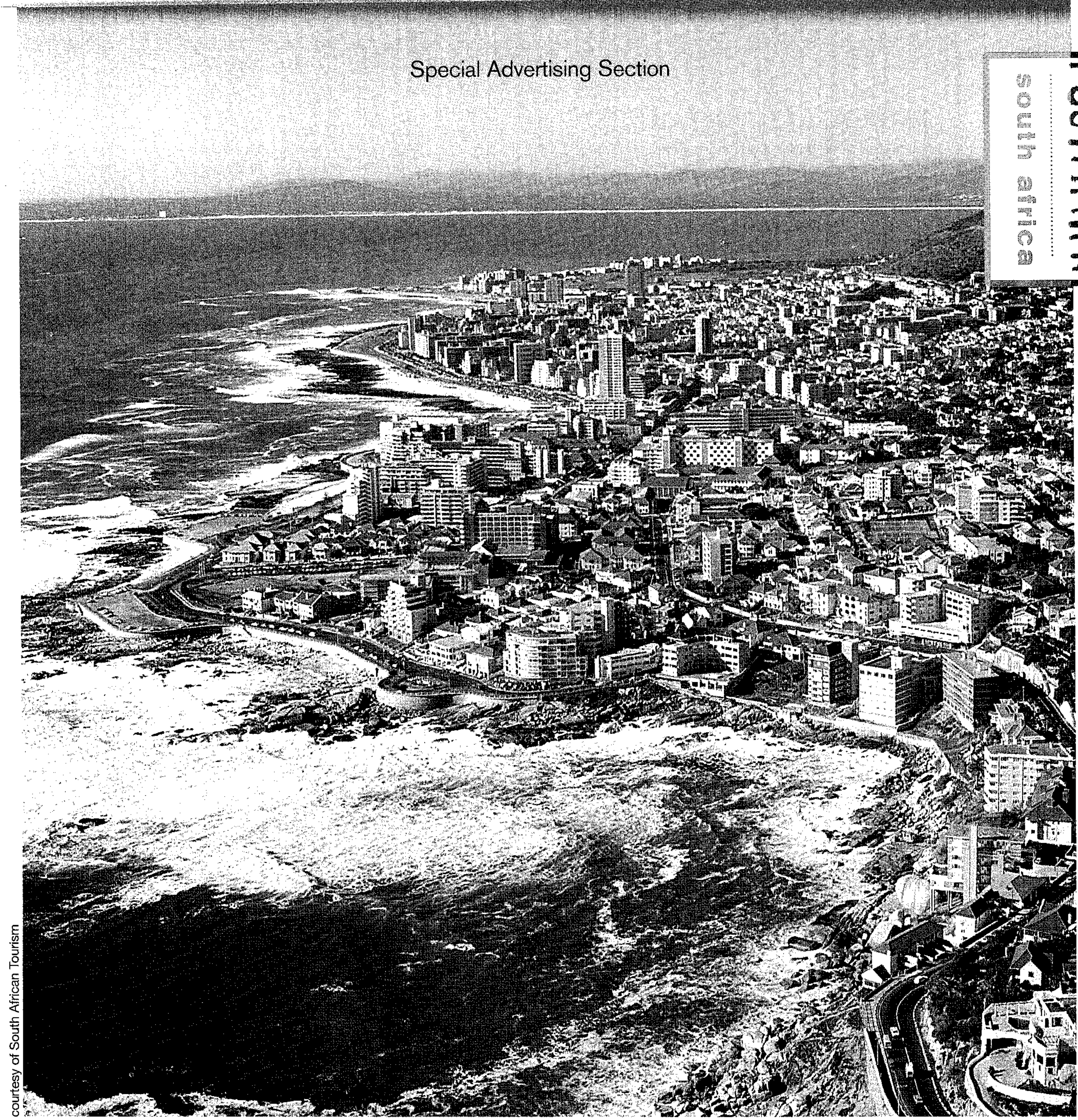
Dear: (CHILD'S NAME)
From: Your loving parents

We hereby inform you that we will no longer require your services. As a child who is being laid off, you are afforded certain options with regard to your benefits.

Reinstatement: If a vacancy occurs within the competitive area in the sibling or pet division, you will be offered reinstatement for a period of one year, provided you behave. If such offer is refused, you will forfeit subsequent reinstatement offers.

Personal items: If you have at least one year of service, you are entitled to retain your blankie, Teddy bear, and/or other personal items.

Childhood pets: If you have ten (10) years of creditable family service, you are eligible to take Fluffy. ♦



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WILD ENCHANTMENT

BY SIMON MILLS

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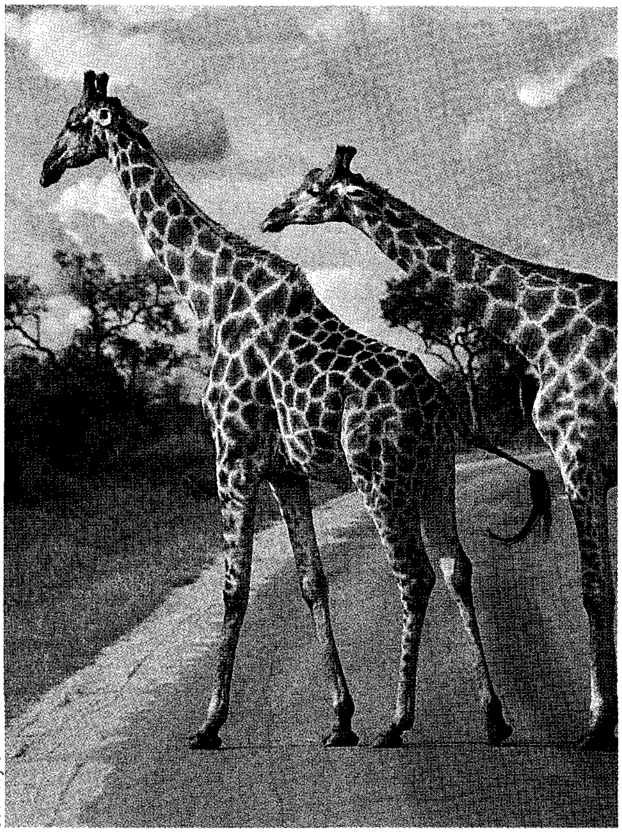

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NECK IN NECK
Giraffes can be found in the pristine parks all over South Africa.

Travellers will also exult in up-close-and-personal encounters with giraffes, rhinos, lions, and elephants in majestic Kruger National Park. They can visit the enchanting Winelands, South Africa's equivalent of Napa Valley, with its imposing mountains and Cape Dutch manor homes set in fertile valleys planted with vines that span rolling fields.

Dramatic Cape Town never fails to enchant, set as it is under looming Table Mountain. This landmark (standing some 3,500 feet above sea level) is part of a nature reserve and there are more than a hundred scenic ways to climb it. Most visitors, however, opt for a cable car that whisks them to the top in moments. From the summit, the world is laid out in all directions.

Those who would rather experience the glories of a mountain from the comfort of a café can head over to the upmarket Victoria & Alfred Waterfront. Here one can enjoy a gastronomic journey at the water's edge in any of seventy different dining establishments. Cape Town's coastline, often called South Africa's "Platinum Mile," features some of the world's most spectacular beaches, along with all manner of luxury accommodations.

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Roy Campbell opined in "The Wayzgoose," his 1928 poem: "South Africa renowned both far and wide/ For politics and little else beside." Hardly! Instead, it is now a freethinking, constantly evolving "rainbow nation" on an enthusiastic, self-improvement mission. South Africa welcomes travellers with a hospitality that often surprises.

But is it safe, asks the prospective visitor? Most definitely so. Crime is almost nonexistent in the South African countryside, and the vast majority of people who visit the country's cities do so without any untoward incident. A tad of conventional prudence is always a good idea when visiting foreign lands. It's a small price to pay for an extraordinary experience.

And, what sort of an intractably unromantic, hard-hearted person would fail to be moved by so much magnificence? Here, satisfaction can be safely guaranteed.

Simon Mills is a contributing editor of the British GQ *and a columnist for the* London Evening Standard.

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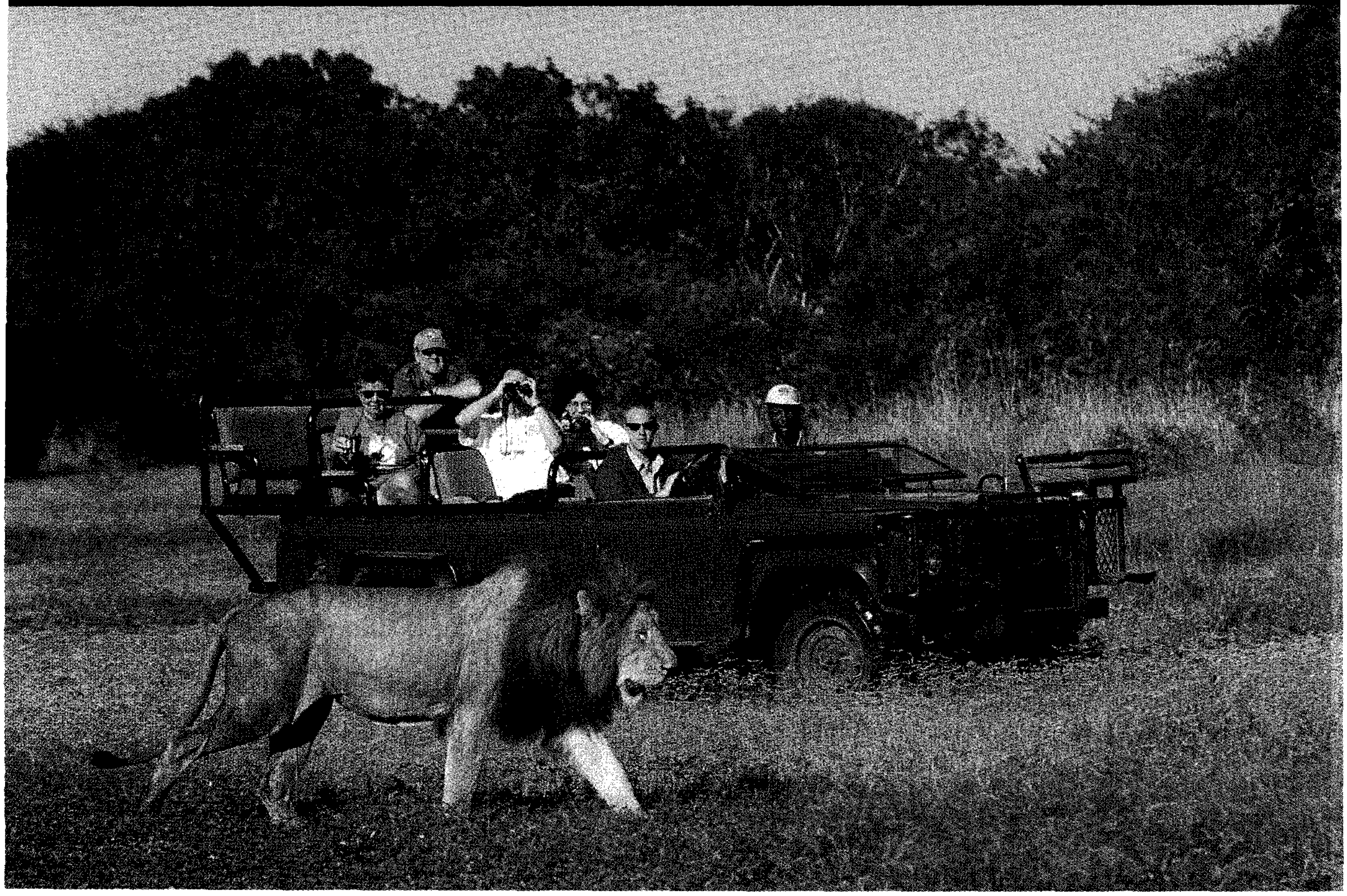

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DEPT. OF GASTRONOMY

MISSING LINKS

Boudin, anyone? In praise of the Cajun foodstuff that doesn't get around.

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

Of all the things I've eaten in the Cajun parishes of Louisiana—an array of foodstuffs which has been characterized as somewhere between extensive and deplorable—I yearn most often for boudin. When people in Breaux Bridge or Opelousas or Jeanerette talk about boudin (pronounced "boo-DAN"), they mean a soft, spicy mixture of rice and pork and liver and seasoning which is squeezed hot into the mouth from a sausage casing, usually in the parking lot of a grocery store and preferably while leaning against a pickup. ("Boudin" means blood sausage to the French, most of whom would probably line up for immigration visas if they ever tasted the Cajun version.) I figure that about eighty per cent of the boudin purchased in Louisiana is consumed before the purchaser has left the parking lot, and most of the rest of it is polished off in the car. In other words, Cajun boudin not only doesn't get outside the state; it usually doesn't even get home. For Americans who haven't been to South Louisiana, boudin remains as foreign as *gado-gado* or *cheb;* for them, the word "Cajun" on a menu is simply a synonym for burnt fish or too much pepper. When I am daydreaming of boudin, it sometimes occurs to me that of all the indignities the Acadians of Louisiana have had visited upon them—being booted out of Nova Scotia, being ridiculed as rubes and swamp rats by neighboring Anglophones for a couple of centuries, being punished for speaking their own language in the schoolyard—nothing has been as deeply insulting as what restaurants outside South Louisiana present as Cajun food.

The scarcity of boudin in the rest of the country makes it all the more pleasurable to have a Louisiana friend who likes to travel and occasionally carries along an ice chest full of local ingredients, just in case. I happen to have such a friend in James Edmunds, of New Iberia, Louisiana. Over the past twenty years or so, James's visits to New York have regularly included the ritualistic unpacking of an ice chest on my kitchen table. His custom has been to bring the ice chest if he plans to cook a meal during the visit—crawfish étouffée, for instance, or gumbo or his signature shrimp stew. On those trips, the ice chest would also hold some boudin. I was so eager to get my hands on the boudin that I often ate it right in the kitchen, as soon as we heated it through, rather than trying to make the experience more authentic by searching for something appropriate to lean against. In lower Manhattan, after all, it could take a while to find a pickup truck.

Then there came the day when I was sentenced to what I think of as medium-security cholesterol prison. (Once the cholesterol penal system was concessioned out to the manufacturers of statin drugs, medium-security cholesterol prison came to mean that the inmate could eat the occasional bit of bacon from the plate of a generous luncheon companion but could not order his own B.L.T.) James stopped bringing boudin, the warders having summarily dismissed my argument that the kind I particularly like—Cajun boudin varies greatly from maker to maker—was mostly just rice anyway.

I did not despair. James is inventive, and he's flexible. Several years ago, he decided that an architect friend of his who lives just outside New Iberia made the best crawfish étouffée in the area, and, like one of those research-and-development hot shots who are always interested in ways of improving the product, he took the trouble to look into the recipe, which had been handed down to the architect by forebears of unadulterated Cajunness. James was prepared for the possibility that one of the secret ingredients of the architect's blissful étouffée was, say, some herb available only at certain times of year in the swamps of the Atchafalaya Basin Spillway. As it turned out, one of the secret ingredients was Campbell's cream-of-mushroom soup. (Although crawfish étouffée, which means smothered crawfish, is one of the best-known Cajun dishes, it emerged only in the fifties, when a lot of people assumed that just about any recipe was enhanced by a can of Campbell's cream-of-mushroom soup.) During ensuing étouffée preparations in New York, there would come a moment when James said, in his soft South Louisiana accent, "I think this might be a good time for certain sensitive people to leave the kitchen for just a little while." Then we'd hear the whine of the can opener, followed by an unmistakable *glub-glub-glub*.

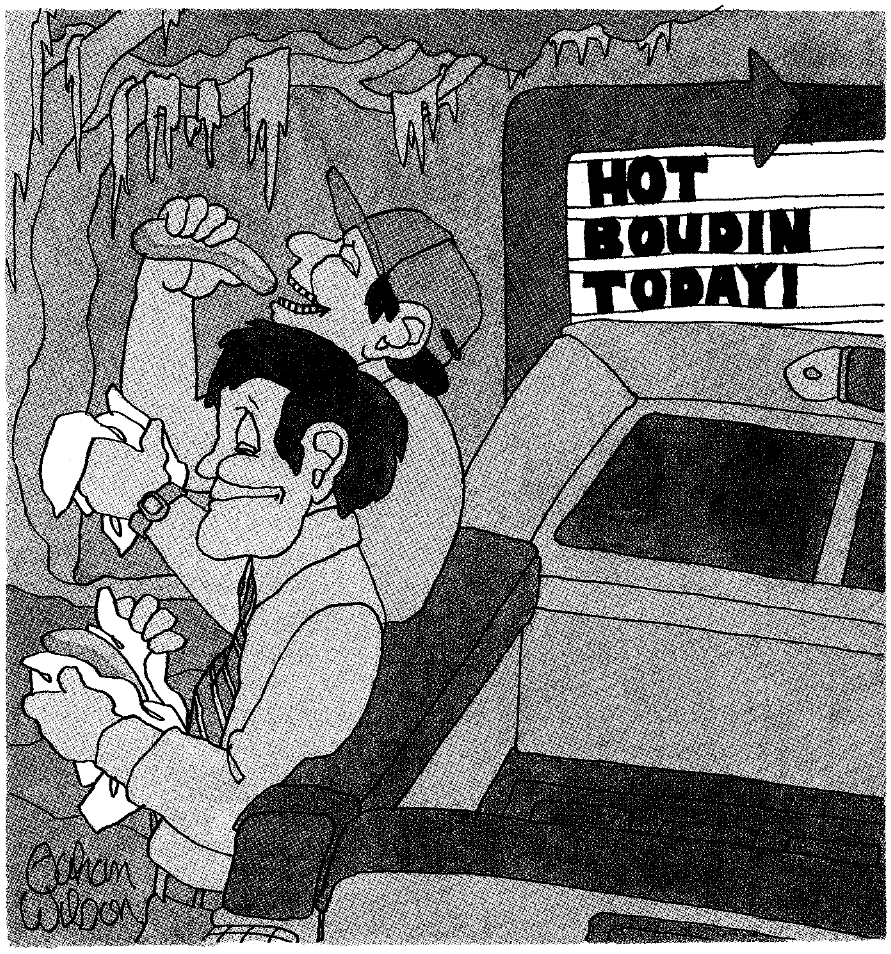
A few years after my sentence was imposed, James and I were talking on the telephone about an imminent New York visit that was to include the preparation of one of his dinner specialties, and he told me not to worry about the problem of items rattling around in his ice chest. I told him that I actually hadn't given that problem much thought, what with global warming and nuclear proliferation and all. As if he hadn't heard me, he went on to say that he'd stopped the rattling with what he called packing-boudin.

"Packing-boudin?"

"That's right," James said.

I thought about that for a moment or two. "Well, it's got bubble wrap beat," I finally said. "And we wouldn't have to worry about adding to this country's solid-waste-disposal problem. Except for the casing." The habit of tossing aside the casing of a spent link of boudin is so ingrained in some parts of Louisiana that there is a bumper sticker reading "Caution: Driver Eating Boudin"—a way of warning the cars that follow about the possibility of their windshields being splattered with what appear to be odd-looking insects. From that visit on, I took charge of packing-boudin disposal whenever James was carrying his ice chest, and I tried not to dwell on my disappointment when he wasn't.

Not long ago, I got a call from James before a business trip to New York which was not scheduled to include the preparation of a Louisiana meal—that is, a trip that would ordinarily not include boudin. He asked if he could store a turducken in my freezer for a couple of days; he was making a delivery for a friend. I hesitated. I was trying to remember precisely what a turducken is, other than something Cajuns make that seems to go against the laws of nature.



Most boudin never makes it to your house—it usually gets eaten in the parking lot.

GAHAN WILSON

James, perhaps thinking that my hesitancy reflected some reluctance to take on the storage job, said, "There'd be rental-boudin involved, of course."

"Fair's fair," I said.

What led to my being in Louisiana a couple of weeks later for something that James insisted on calling a boudin blitzkrieg is rather complicated. As a matter of convenience, James had picked up the rental-boudin at the same place he'd bought the turducken, Hebert's Specialty Meats, in Maurice, Louisiana. Hebert's is a leading purveyor of turducken, which it makes by taking the bones out of a chicken and a duck and a turkey, stuffing the chicken with stuffing, stuffing the stuffed chicken into a similarly stuffed duck, and stuffing all that, along with a third kind of stuffing, into the turkey. The result cannot be criticized for lacking complexity, and it presents a challenge to the holiday carver almost precisely as daunting as meat loaf.

The emergence of turducken, eight or ten years ago, did not surprise Cajuns. When it comes to eating, they take improvisation for granted. Some people in New Iberia, for instance, collect the sludge left over from mashing peppers at the McIlhenny Tabasco plant and use it to spice up the huge pots of water they employ to boil crawfish. When Thanksgiving approaches, they fill the same huge pots with five or six gallons of lard instead of water and produce deep-fried turkey—a dish that is related to the traditional roast turkey in the way that *soupe au pistou* in Provence or *ribollita* in Tuscany is related to the vegetable soup that was served in your high-school cafeteria. James's wife, Susan Hester, who works at the Iberia Parish Library, once heard a deputy sheriff who was lecturing on personal defense recommend buying water-based rather than oil-based pepper spray not only because it comes off the clothing easier but because it is preferable for flavoring the meat being grilled at a cookout.

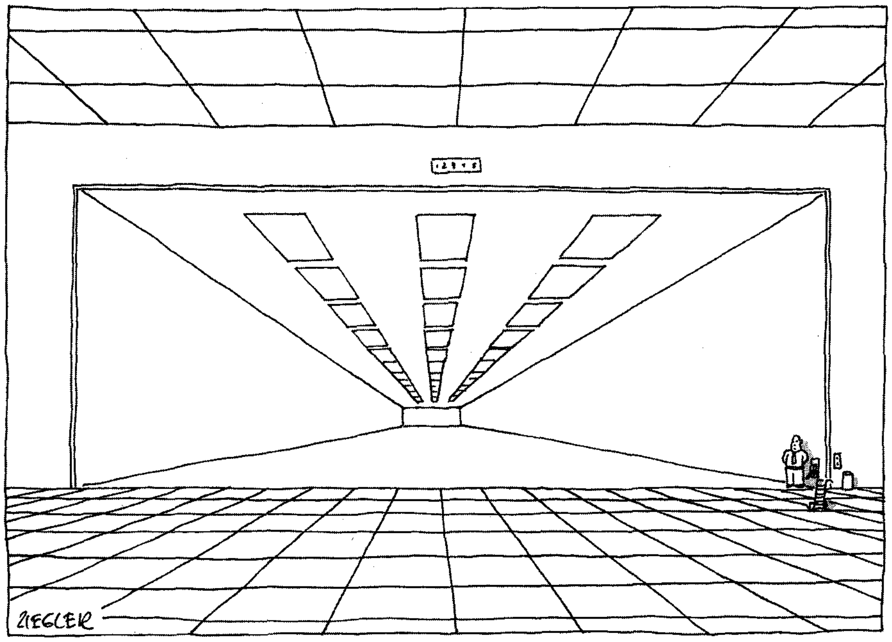
Although I didn't want to appear ungrateful for the rental-boudin, I reminded James that his buying boudin in Maurice, which is more than twenty miles from New Iberia, flies in the face of the rule promulgated by his old friend Barry Jean Ancelet, a folklorist and French professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette: in the Cajun country of Louisiana, the best boudin is always the boudin closest to where you live, and the best place to eat boiled crawfish is always extraordinarily inconvenient to your house. James is aware that this theory has a problem with internal consistency—it means, for instance, that for him the best boudin is at Bonin's meat market, in New Iberia, and for Barry Jean Ancelet it's at The Best Stop Supermarket, in Scott—but he reconciles that by saying that Barry, being a folklorist, has a different notion of objective truth than some other people.

We had never talked much about the source of the boudin James brought to New York, except that I knew it had changed once, some years ago, when a purveyor named Dud Breaux retired. Once his purchase of boudin in Maurice raised the subject, though, James assured me that under ordinary circumstances he follows the Ancelet Dictum: before leaving for New York, he stocks up at Bonin's, assuming that the proprietor happens to be in what James called "a period of non-retirement." The proprietor's name is Waldo Bonin, but he is known in New Iberia as Nook. He is a magisterial man with white hair and a white mustache and a white T-shirt and a white apron. Nook Bonin has not retired as many times as Frank Sinatra did, but he is about even with Michael Jordan.

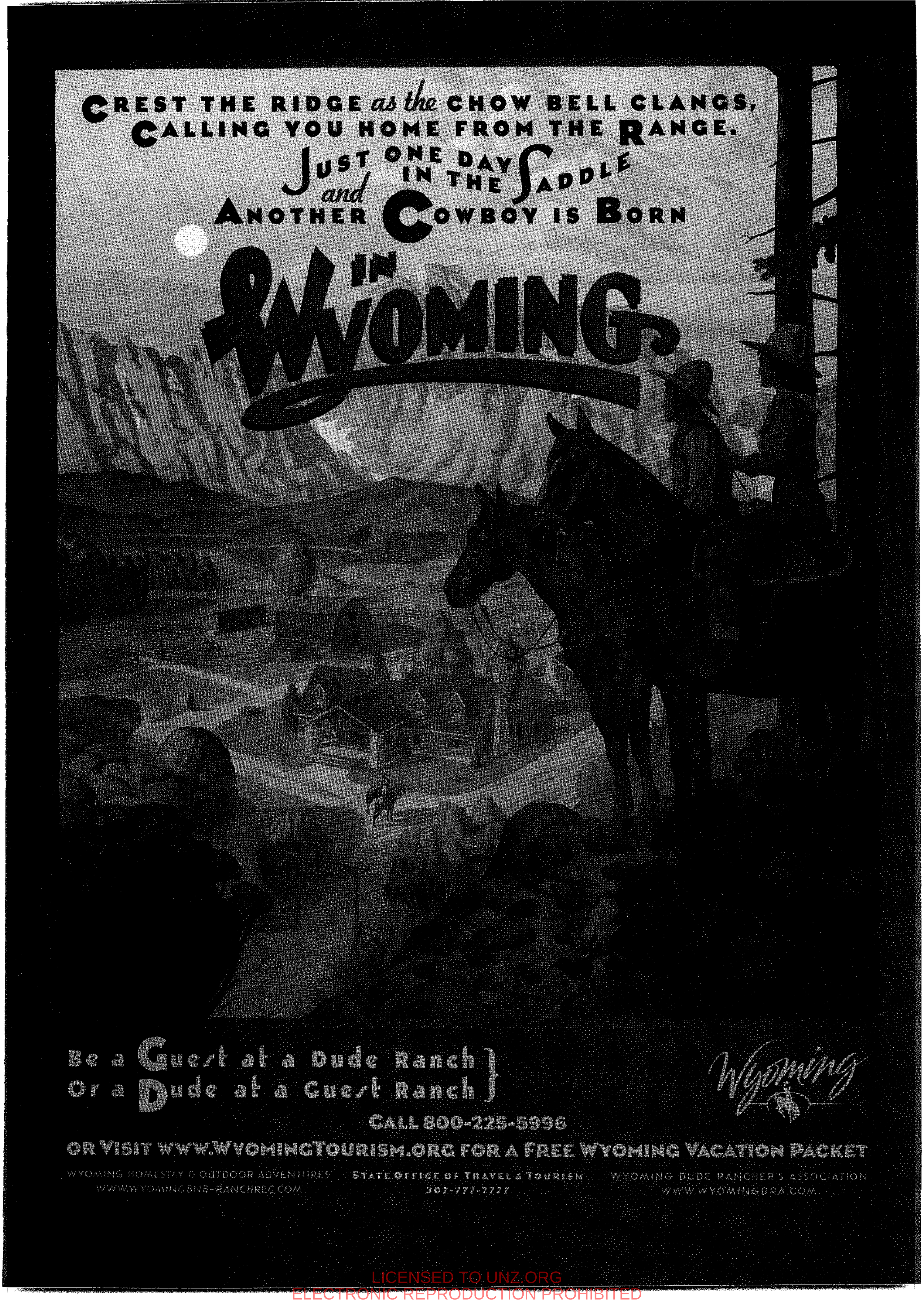
Like one of those boxers who bid farewell to the ring with some regularity, Bonin comes back every time with a little less in his repertoire. For nearly fifty years, he and his wife, Delores, ran a full-service meat market that also included a lot of Cajun specialties. The first time they came out of retirement, they had dropped everything but boudin and cracklins (crunchy pieces of fatback that are produced by rendering lard from a hog) and hogshead cheese, plus soft drinks for those who weren't going to make it back to their cars with their purchases intact. The second time, when the Bonins started appearing only on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings, they had dropped the cracklins. As a matter of policy, James doesn't actually eat cracklins—"I just think it's good to know that there's a line out there you're not going to cross," he has said—but, as someone who depends on Nook Bonin's boudin, he had to be disturbed by what appeared to be a trend. "I wouldn't mind losing the Cokes," he has said, when envisioning what might be dropped in the Bonins' next comeback. "But it is getting kind of scary."

The recipe for the boudin sold at Bonin's is a secret. In fact, it has occurred to James that the proprietor himself may not know the secret: people customarily speak of Nook Bonin's boudin, but it is actually made by Delores Bonin, who goes heavy on the rice and uses an array of spices that, I would be prepared to testify under oath, owe nothing to the test kitchens of the Campbell's Soup Company. Although the Bonins have two daughters, neither of them chose to go into the family business. Anna is an administrator in a special-education program, and Melissa is an artist. James and Susan happen to be longtime admirers of Melissa's work—some years ago, they bought the first painting she ever sold—but James can't help thinking that if she had chosen to put her creative energies into boudin-making rather than art, the community would not now be beset by the tension brought on by her parents' stairstep retirements. At this point, James and Susan have pinned their hopes on the Bonins' only grandchild—Melissa's son, Emile. Unfortunately, Emile is only ten years old. James was cheered, though, when we walked into the Bonins' store on a Saturday morning and Delores Bonin reached over the meat case to hand us a photograph of Emile posing behind the device that stuffs boudin into sausage casing. Emile was smiling.

Even assuming that Emile decides to cast his lot with boudin, though, it will be a number of years before he's old enough to take over the business. James and I discussed that situation in the sort of conversation I can imagine a working team from State and De-



THE FREIGHT ELEVATOR FOR THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING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AND: A calendar of
New Yorker events
across the country

THE WORLD

Splendid that I'd revel even more in the butterflies harvesting pollen
from the lavender in my father-in-law's garden in Normandy
when I bring to mind Francis Ponge's poem where he transfigures them
to levitating matches, and the flowers they dip into to unwashed cups;
it doesn't work with lavender, but still, so lovely, matches, cups,
and lovely, too, to be here in the fragrant summer sunlight reading.

Just now an essay in *Le Monde*, on Fragonard, his oval oil sketch
of a mother opening the bodice of her rosily blushing daughter
to demonstrate to a young artist that the girl would be suitable as a "model";
the snide quotation marks insinuate she might be other than she seems,
but to me she seems entirely enchanting, even without her top
and with the painter's cane casually lifting her skirt from her ankle.
Fragonard needs so little for his plot; the girl's disarranged underslips
a few quick swirls, the mother's compliant mouth a blur, her eyes
two dots of black, yet you can see how crucial this transaction is to her,
how accommodating she'd be in working through potential complications.
In the shadows behind, a smear of fabric spills from a drawer,
a symbol surely, though when one starts thinking symbol what isn't?

Each sprig of lavender lifting jauntily as its sated butterfly departs,
Catherine beneath the beech tree with her father and sisters, me watching,
everything and everyone might stand for something else, *be* something else.
Though in truth I can't imagine what; reality has put itself so solidly before me
there's little need for mystery. . . . Except for us, for how we take the world
to us, and make it more, more than we are, more even than itself.

—*C.K. Williams*

fense having about whether sufficient steps have been taken to guarantee that this country maintains a secure and unbroken supply of cobalt in the face of any contingency. We decided that, just in case the Bonin family line of succession does get broken, I should sample some of the possibilities for what I suppose you'd have to call replacement-boudin. This is why Susan, who was carrying a cutting board and a kitchen knife, and James and I were driving around on a sunny weekend, tasting what Nook Bonin had to offer and testing out, in a judicious way, the work of other purveyors. At least, that's what I would tell the penal authorities if the question ever came up.

By Sunday night, we had tried the boudin from, among other places, Legnon's Boucherie, in New Iberia, and Bruce's U-Need-A-Butcher, in Lafayette, and Poche's Meat Market and Restaurant, in Poche Bridge, and Heleaux's Grocery, also in Lafayette, and, of course, The Best Stop, in Scott. We hadn't by any measure exhausted the supply of even highly recommended boudin purveyors. For instance, we hadn't tried Johnson's Grocery, in Eunice, or Billeaud's, in Broussard, a town near Lafayette that used to have an annual boudin festival. A friend of mine in New Orleans, Randy Fertel, after tracking down the source of the boudin that he looks forward to eating every year at the New Orleans Jazz Fest, had recommended Abe's Cajun Market, in Lake Charles, which is practically in Texas, but there hadn't been time. Still, I had tasted enough contenders for replacement-boudin to tell James that I hoped Nook and Delores Bonin truly understood that for people who have been active all their lives retirement can be a trap.

I had to admit to Barry Jean Ancelet, who joined us at The Best Stop, that his local purveyor makes a distinguished link of boudin—moderate, shading toward meaty, when it comes to the all-important rice/meat ratio. Lawrence Menard, who opened The Best Stop in 1986, told us that he now sells between sixty-five hundred and seven thousand pounds of boudin a week. In a conversation that began, appropriately, at The Best Stop and continued later that evening in a restaurant called Bubba Frey's, Barry explained the Ancelet Dictum to us in more detail. A link of boudin, he said, is a clean food, essentially treated by Cajuns as "an enclosed lunch"; it's even cleaner if you eat the casing, which Lawrence Menard himself always does. Boiled crawfish, on the other hand, is notoriously messy, leaving a table piled with shells and crawfish heads. It stands to reason that you'd want to leave that kind of mess far from your lair. He pointed out that for boiled crawfish he and James both favor a place called Hawk's, whose location is inconvenient to both of them and to practically everybody else. In a book called "Cajun Country Guide," Macon Fry and Julie Posner wrote that the reason Hawk's is so good is that Hawk Arceneaux puts his crawfish through a twenty-four-hour freshwater purging process, but, then again, they're not folklorists.

Since the "e" in Frey is silent, Bubba Frey's sounds at first like a succinct description of Southern cooking rather than a restaurant. It is a restaurant, though—a bright, knotty-pine place with a Cajun combo that, on the night we were there, included Bubba Frey himself as one of its fiddlers. We went there after a performance of "Rendez-vous des Cadiens," a Cajun radio show that Barry m.c.s every Saturday at the Liberty Theatre in Eunice—a town in an area known as the Cajun Prairies. For some time, Bubba Frey has run a general store in a nearby hamlet called Mowata—a name I don't intend to investigate, just in case it is unconnected with a flood or the discovery of a particularly capacious well—and not long ago he decided to add a restaurant next door. Boudin balls were listed as an appetizer. Boudin isn't commonly served by restaurants, although Café des Amis, in Breaux Bridge, offers something called *oreille de cochon*—beignet dough that is baked in the shape of pigs' ears, covered with powdered sugar, and, for an extra dollar, stuffed with boudin. It's a dollar well spent.

Boudin balls are made by rolling boudin into balls, coating them with something like Zatarain's Fish Fry, and frying away. At Bubba Frey's, they were delicious, and the proprietor, who came over to our table between sets, told us that the boudin was made at his store next door. I told James that the next time he happened to be on the Cajun Prairies he might consider finding out what Bubba's boudin tasted like unfried. Then it occurred to me that if James liked it better than he liked Nook Bonin's boudin he might feel obligated to move to Mowata. James did not seem enthusiastic about that prospect. He and Susan have both lived in New Iberia virtually all their lives, and have a lot of friends there. Also, James subscribes to the theory that, perhaps because the French settlement of the Cajun Prairies included a strong admixture of Germans, people there are a bit stiffer than the people who live in the Cajun bayous. I don't know how stiffness in Cajuns would manifest itself. Maybe they use only two kinds of stuffing in their turduckens.

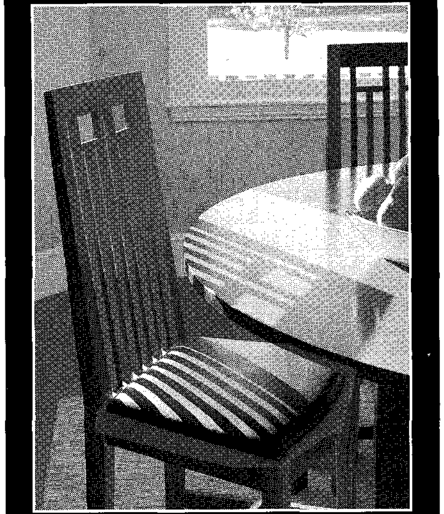
A couple of weeks later, I heard from James: the boudin at Bubba Frey's store was, as we suspected, excellent—"a commendable second place to Nook," James wrote, "but still not with the transcendent special taste." Moving to Mowata was not on the table. Also, he and Susan and the Bonins' daughter Melissa had gone to dinner together and, as it happened, had fallen into a little chat about the future. "I told her that if Emile learned the recipe and learned how to make boudin he'd never starve," James said. "And neither, it goes without saying, would we." ♦

From the Times.

"Mayor Beame was born in Whitechapel, in London," a spokesman for the Lord Mayor said. "Whitechapel was then and still is a rather poor area. You've heard of Jack the Ripper. Well, Jack the Ripper used to trail the streets of Whitechapel. It's a poor area, and he emigrated from there to New York and rather later, as the story goes, became Mayor."

Mystery solved.

THOS. MOSER
CABINETMAKERS



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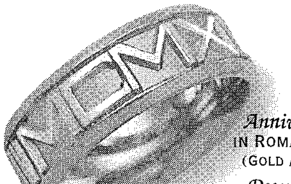

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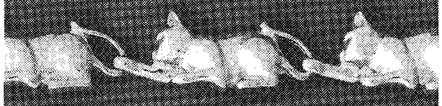

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ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE LEARNING CURVE

Like everyone else, surgeons need practice. That's where you come in.

BY ATUL GAWANDE

The patient needed a central line. "Here's your chance," S., the chief resident, said. I had never done one before. "Get set up and then page me when you're ready to start."

It was my fourth week in surgical training. The pockets of my short white coat bulged with patient printouts, laminated cards with instructions for doing CPR and reading EKGs and using the dictation system, two surgical handbooks, a stethoscope, wound-dressing supplies, meal tickets, a penlight, scissors, and about a dollar in loose change. As I headed up the stairs to the patient's floor, I rattled.

This will be good, I tried to tell myself: my first real procedure. The patient—fiftyish, stout, taciturn—was recovering from abdominal surgery he'd had about a week earlier. His bowel function hadn't yet returned, and he was unable to eat. I explained to him that he needed intravenous nutrition and that this required a "special line" that would go into his chest. I said that I would put the line in him while he was in his bed, and that it would involve my numbing a spot on his chest with a local anesthetic, and then threading the line in. I did not say that the line was eight inches long and would go into his vena cava, the main blood vessel to his heart. Nor did I say how tricky the procedure could be. There were "slight risks" involved, I said, such as bleeding and lung collapse; in experienced hands, complications of this sort occur in fewer than one case in a hundred.

But, of course, mine were not experienced hands. And the disasters I knew about weighed on my mind: the woman who had died within minutes from massive bleeding when a resident lacerated her vena cava; the man whose chest had to be opened because a resident lost hold of a wire inside the line, which then floated down to the patient's heart; the man who had a cardiac arrest when the procedure put him into ventricular fibrillation. I said nothing of such things, naturally, when I asked the patient's permission to do his line. He said, "O.K."

I had seen S. do two central lines; one was the day before, and I'd attended to every step. I watched how she set out her instruments and laid her patient down and put a rolled towel between his shoulder blades to make his chest arch out. I watched how she swabbed his chest with antiseptic, injected lidocaine, which is a local anesthetic, and then, in full sterile garb, punctured his chest near his clavicle with a fat three-inch needle on a syringe. The patient hadn't even flinched. She told me how to avoid hitting the lung ("Go in at a steep angle," she'd said. "Stay *right* under the clavicle"), and how to find the subclavian vein, a branch to the vena cava lying atop the lung near its apex ("Go in at a steep angle. Stay *right* under the clavicle"). She pushed the needle in almost all the way. She drew back on the syringe. And she was in. You knew because the syringe filled with maroon blood. ("If it's bright red, you've hit an artery," she said. "That's not good.") Once you have the tip of this needle poking in the vein, you somehow have to widen the hole in the vein wall, fit the catheter in, and snake it in the right direction—down to the heart, rather than up to the brain—all without tearing through vessels, lung, or anything else.

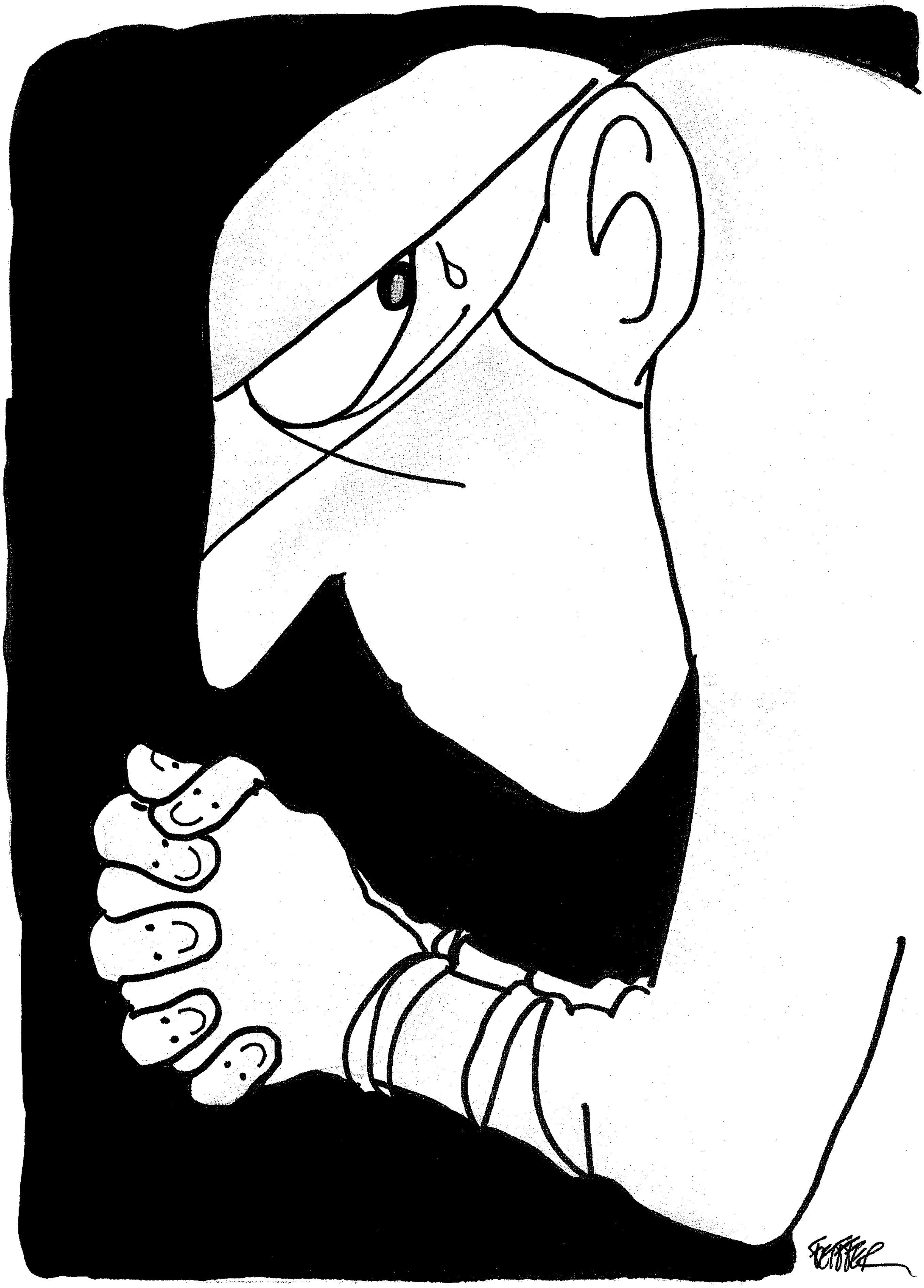
To do this, S. explained, you start by getting a guide wire in place. She pulled the syringe off, leaving the needle in. Blood flowed out. She picked up a two-foot-long twenty-gauge wire that looked like the steel D string of an electric guitar, and passed nearly its full length through the needle's bore, into the vein, and onward toward the vena cava. "Never force it in," she warned, "and never, ever let go of it." A string of rapid heartbeats fired off on the cardiac monitor, and she quickly pulled the wire back an inch. It had poked into the heart, causing momentary fibrillation. "Guess we're in the right place," she said to me quietly. Then to the patient: "You're doing great. Only a few minutes now." She pulled the needle out over the wire and replaced it with a bullet of thick, stiff plastic, which she pushed in tight to widen the vein opening. She then removed this dilator and threaded the central line—a spaghetti-thick, flexible yellow plastic tube—over the wire until it was all the way in. Now she could remove the wire. She flushed the line with a heparin solution and sutured it to the patient's chest. And that was it.

Today, it was my turn to try. First, I had to gather supplies—a central-line kit, gloves, gown, cap, mask, lidocaine—which took me forever. When I finally had the stuff together, I stopped for a minute outside the patient's door, trying to recall the steps. They remained frustratingly hazy. But I couldn't put it off any longer. I had a page-long list of other things to get done: Mrs. A needed to be discharged; Mr. B needed an abdominal ultrasound arranged; Mrs. C needed her skin staples removed. And every fifteen minutes or so I was getting paged with more tasks: Mr. X was nauseated and needed to be seen; Miss Y's family was here and needed "someone" to talk to them; Mr. Z needed a laxative. I took a deep breath, put on my best don't-worry-I-know-what-I'm-doing look, and went in.

I placed the supplies on a bedside table, untied the patient's gown, and laid him down flat on the mattress, with his chest bare and his arms at his sides. I flipped on a fluorescent overhead light and raised his bed to my height. I paged S. I put on my gown and gloves and, on a sterile tray, laid out the central line, the guide wire, and other materials from the kit. I drew up five cc's of lidocaine in a syringe, soaked two sponge sticks in the yellow-brown Betadine, and opened up the suture packaging.

S. arrived. "What's his platelet count?"

JULES FEIFFER



I stopped for a minute outside the patient's door, trying to recall the steps. They remained hazy. But I couldn't put it off any longer.

My stomach knotted. I hadn't checked. That was bad: too low and he could have a serious bleed from the procedure. She went to check a computer. The count was acceptable.

Chastened, I started swabbing his chest with the sponge sticks. "Got the shoulder roll underneath him?" S. asked. Well, no, I had forgotten that, too. The patient gave me a look. S., saying nothing, got a towel, rolled it up, and slipped it under his back for me. I finished applying the antiseptic and then draped him so that only his right upper chest was exposed. He squirmed a bit beneath the drapes. S. now inspected my tray. I girded myself.

"Where's the extra syringe for flushing the line when it's in?" Damn. She went out and got it.

I felt for my landmarks. *Here*? I asked with my eyes, not wanting to undermine the patient's confidence any further. She nodded. I numbed the spot with lidocaine. ("You'll feel a stick and a burn now, sir.") Next, I took the three-inch needle in hand and poked it through the skin. I advanced it slowly and uncertainly, a few millimetres at a time. This is a big goddam needle, I kept thinking. I couldn't believe I was sticking it into someone's chest. I concentrated on maintaining a steep angle of entry, but kept spearing his clavicle instead of slipping beneath it.

"Ow!" he shouted.

"Sorry," I said. S. signalled with a kind of surfing hand gesture to go underneath the clavicle. This time, it went in. I drew back on the syringe. Nothing. She pointed deeper. I went in deeper. Nothing. I withdrew the needle, flushed out some bits of tissue clogging it, and tried again.

"*Ow!*"

Too steep again. I found my way underneath the clavicle once more. I drew the syringe back. Still nothing. He's too obese, I thought. S. slipped on gloves and a gown. "How about I have a look?" she said. I handed her the needle and stepped aside. She plunged the needle in, drew back on the syringe, and, just like that, she was in. "We'll be done shortly," she told the patient.

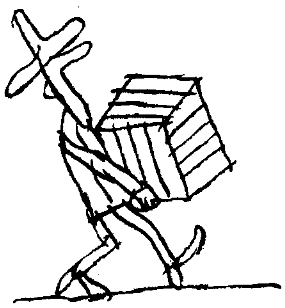
She let me continue with the next steps, which I bumbled through. I didn't realize how long and floppy the guide wire was until I pulled the coil out of its plastic sleeve, and, putting one end of it into the patient, I very nearly contaminated the other. I forgot about the dilating step until she reminded me. Then, when I put in the dilator, I didn't push quite hard enough, and it was really S. who pushed it all the way in. Finally, we got the line in, flushed it, and sutured it in place.

Outside the room, S. said that I could be less tentative the next time, but that I shouldn't worry too much about how things had gone. "You'll get it," she said. "It just takes practice." I wasn't so sure. The procedure remained wholly mysterious to me. And I could not get over the idea of jabbing a needle into someone's chest so deeply and so blindly. I awaited the X-ray afterward with trepidation. But it came back fine: I had not injured the lung and the line was in the right place.

Not everyone appreciates the attractions of surgery. When you are a medical student in the operating room for the first time, and you see the surgeon press the scalpel to someone's body and open it like a piece of fruit, you either shudder in horror or gape in awe. I gaped. It was not just the blood and guts that enthralled me. It was also the idea that a person, a mere mortal, would have the confidence to wield that scalpel in the first place.

There is a saying about surgeons: "Sometimes wrong; never in doubt." This is meant as a reproof, but to me it seemed their strength. Every day, surgeons are faced with uncertainties. Information is inadequate; the science is ambiguous; one's knowledge and abilities are never perfect. Even with the simplest operation, it cannot be taken for granted that a patient will come through better off—or even alive. Standing at the operating table, I wondered how the surgeon knew that all the steps would go as planned, that bleeding would be controlled and infection would not set in and organs would not be injured. He didn't, of course. But he cut anyway.

Later, while still a student, I was allowed to make an incision myself. The surgeon drew a six-inch dotted line with a marking pen across an anesthetized patient's abdomen and then, to my surprise, had the nurse hand me the knife. It was still warm from the autoclave. The surgeon had me stretch the skin taut with the thumb and forefinger of my free hand. He told me to make one smooth slice down to the fat. I put the belly of the blade to the skin and cut. The experience was odd and addictive, mixing exhilaration from the calculated violence of the act, anxiety about getting it right, and a righteous faith that it was somehow for the person's good. There was also the slightly nauseating feeling of finding that it took more force than I'd realized. (Skin is thick and springy, and on my first pass I did not go nearly deep enough; I had to cut twice to get through.) The moment made me want to be a surgeon—not an amateur handed the knife for a brief moment but someone with the confidence and ability to proceed as if it were routine.



A resident begins, however, with none of this air of mastery—only an overpowering instinct against doing anything like pressing a knife against flesh or jabbing a needle into someone's chest. On my first day as a surgical resident, I was assigned to the emergency room. Among my first patients was a skinny, dark-haired woman in her late twenties who hobbled in, teeth gritted, with a two-foot-long wooden chair leg somehow nailed to the bottom of her foot. She explained that a kitchen chair had collapsed under her and, as she leaped up to keep from falling, her bare foot had stomped down on a three-inch screw sticking out of one of the chair legs. I tried very hard to look like someone who had not got his medical diploma just the week before. Instead, I was determined to be nonchalant, the kind of guy who had seen this sort of thing a hundred times before. I inspected her foot, and could see that the screw was embedded in the bone at the base of her big toe. There was no bleeding and, as far as I could feel, no fracture.

"Wow, that must hurt," I blurted out, idiotically.

The obvious thing to do was give her a tetanus shot and pull out the screw. I ordered the tetanus shot, but I began to have doubts about pulling out the screw. Suppose she bled? Or suppose I fractured her foot? Or something worse? I excused myself and tracked down Dr. W., the senior surgeon on duty. I found him tending to a car-crash victim. The patient was a mess, and the floor was covered with blood. People were shouting. It was not a good time to ask questions.

I ordered an X-ray. I figured it would buy time and let me check my amateur impression that she didn't have a fracture. Sure enough, getting the X-ray took about an hour, and it showed no fracture—just a common screw embedded, the radiologist said, "in the head of the first metatarsal." I showed the patient the X-ray. "You see, the screw's embedded in the head of the first metatarsal," I said. And the plan? she wanted to know. Ah, yes, the plan.

I went to find Dr. W. He was still busy with the crash victim, but I was able to interrupt to show him the X-ray. He chuckled at the sight of it and asked me what I wanted to do. "Pull the screw out?" I ventured. "Yes," he said, by which he meant "Duh." He made sure I'd given the patient a tetanus shot and then shooed me away.

Back in the examining room, I told her that I would pull the screw out, prepared for her to say something like "You?" Instead she said, "O.K., Doctor." At first, I had her sitting on the exam table, dangling her leg off the side. But that didn't look as if it would work. Eventually, I had her lie with her foot jutting off the table end, the board poking out into the air. With every move, her pain increased. I injected a local anesthetic where the screw had gone in and that helped a little. Now I grabbed her foot in one hand, the board in the other, and for a moment I froze. Could I really do this? Who was I to presume?

Finally, I gave her a one-two-three and pulled, gingerly at first and then hard. She groaned. The screw wasn't budging. I twisted, and abruptly it came free. There was no bleeding. I washed the wound out, and she found she could walk. I warned her of the risks of infection and the signs to look for. Her gratitude was immense and flattering, like the lion's for the mouse—and that night I went home elated.

In surgery, as in anything else, skill, judgment, and confidence are learned through experience, haltingly and humiliatingly. Like the tennis player and the oboist and the guy who fixes hard drives, we need practice to get good at what we do. There is one difference in medicine, though: we practice on people.

"For me, a confession is much too autobiographical."

My second try at placing a central line went no better than the first. The patient was in intensive care, mortally ill, on a ventilator, and needed the line so that powerful cardiac drugs could be delivered directly to her heart. She was also heavily sedated, and for this I was grateful. She'd be oblivious of my fumbling.

My preparation was better this time. I got the towel roll in place and the syringes of heparin on the tray. I checked her lab results, which were fine. I also made a point of draping more widely, so that if I flopped the guide wire around by mistake again, it wouldn't hit anything unsterile.

For all that, the procedure was a bust. I stabbed the needle in too shallow and then too deep. Frustration overcame tentativeness and I tried one angle after another. Nothing worked. Then, for one brief moment, I got a flash of blood in the syringe, indicating that I was in the vein. I anchored the needle with one hand and went to pull the syringe off with the other. But the syringe was jammed on too tightly, so that when I pulled it free I dislodged the needle from the vein. The patient began bleeding into her chest wall. I held pressure the best I could for a solid five minutes, but still her chest turned black and blue around the site. The hematoma made it impossible to put a line through there anymore. I wanted to give up. But she needed a line and the resident supervising me—a second-year this time—was determined that I succeed. After an X-ray showed that I had not injured her lung, he had me try on the other side, with a whole new kit. I missed again, and he took over. It took him several minutes and two or three sticks to find the vein himself and that made me feel better. Maybe she was an unusually tough case.

When I failed with a third patient a few days later, though, the doubts really set in. Again, it was stick, stick, stick, and nothing. I stepped aside. The resident watching me got it on the next try.

Surgeons, as a group, adhere to a curious egalitarianism. They believe in practice, not talent. People often assume that you have to have great hands to become a surgeon, but it's not true. When I interviewed to get into surgery programs, no one made me sew or take a dexterity test or checked to see if my hands were steady. You do not even need all ten fingers to be accepted. To be sure, talent helps. Professors say that every two or three years they'll see someone truly gifted come through a program—someone who picks up complex manual skills unusually quickly, sees tissue planes before others do, anticipates trouble before it happens. Nonetheless, attending surgeons say that what's most important to them is finding people who are conscientious, industrious, and boneheaded enough to keep at practicing this one difficult thing day and night for years on end. As a former residency director put it to me, given a choice between a Ph.D. who had cloned a gene and a sculptor, he'd pick the Ph.D. every time. Sure, he said, he'd bet on the sculptor's being more physically talented; but he'd bet on the Ph.D.'s being less "flaky." And in the end that matters more. Skill, surgeons believe, can be taught; tenacity cannot. It's an odd approach to recruitment, but it continues all the way up the ranks, even in top surgery departments. They start with minions with no experience in surgery, spend years training them, and then take most of their faculty from these same homegrown ranks.

And it works. There have now been many studies of élite performers—concert violinists, chess grand masters, professional ice-skaters, mathematicians, and so forth—and the biggest difference researchers find between them and lesser performers is the amount of deliberate practice they've accumulated. Indeed, the most important talent may be the talent for practice itself. K. Anders Ericsson, a cognitive psychologist and an expert on performance, notes that the most important role that innate factors play may be in a person's *willingness* to engage in sustained training. He has found, for example, that top performers dislike practicing just as much as others do. (That's why, for example, athletes and musicians usually quit practicing when they retire.) But, more than others, they have the will to keep at it anyway.

MY WORD IS MY BOND

"The neighborhood's older now
but it's still
a valley between vaults of stone.
Your corner grocery's gone.

When I walk there I've never left there.

I haunt the place
  where my honor died.

I keep
    a watching
        brief.

When you said
        Now do you love me?
I picked up my ripped shirt
and lied."

—*Marie Ponsot*

I wasn't sure I did. What good was it, I wondered, to keep doing central lines when I wasn't coming close to hitting them? If I had a clear idea of what I was doing wrong, then maybe I'd have something to focus on. But I didn't. Everyone, of course, had suggestions. Go in with the bevel of the needle up. No, go in with the bevel down. Put a bend in the middle of the needle. No, curve the needle. For a while, I tried to avoid doing another line. Soon enough, however, a new case arose.

The circumstances were miserable. It was late in the day, and I'd had to work through the previous night. The patient weighed more than three hundred pounds. He couldn't tolerate lying flat because the weight of his chest and abdomen made it hard for him to breathe. Yet he had a badly infected wound, needed intravenous antibiotics, and no one could find veins in his arms for a peripheral I.V. I had little hope of succeeding. But a resident does what he is told, and I was told to try the line.

I went to his room. He looked scared and said he didn't think he'd last more than a minute on his back. But he said he understood the situation and was willing to make his best effort. He and I decided that he'd be left sitting propped up in bed until the last possible minute. We'd see how far we got after that.

I went through my preparations: checking his blood counts from the lab, putting out the kit, placing the towel roll, and so on. I swabbed and draped his chest while he was still sitting up. S., the chief resident, was watching me this time, and when everything was ready I had her tip him back, an oxygen mask on his face. His flesh rolled up his chest like a wave. I couldn't find his clavicle with my fingertips to line up the right point of entry. And already he was looking short of breath, his face red. I gave S. a "Do you want to take over?" look. Keep going, she signalled. I made a rough guess about where the right spot was, numbed it with lidocaine, and pushed the big needle in. For a second, I thought it wouldn't be long enough to reach through, but then I felt the tip slip underneath his clavicle. I pushed a little deeper and drew back on the syringe. Unbelievably, it filled with blood. I was in. I concentrated on anchoring the needle firmly in place, not moving it a millimetre as I pulled the syringe off and threaded the guide wire in. The wire fed in smoothly. The patient was struggling hard for air now. We sat him up and let him catch his breath. And then, laying him down one more time, I got the entry dilated and slid the central line in. "Nice job" was all S. said, and then she left.

I still have no idea what I did differently that day. But from then on my lines went in. That's the funny thing about practice. For days and days, you make out only the fragments of what to do. And then one day you've got the thing whole. Conscious learning becomes unconscious knowledge, and you cannot say precisely how.

I have now put in more than a hundred central lines. I am by no means infallible. Certainly, I have had my fair share of complications. I punctured a patient's lung, for example—the right lung of a chief of surgery from another hospital, no less—and, given the odds, I'm sure such things will happen again. I still have the occasional case that should go easily but doesn't, no matter what I do. (We have a term for this. "How'd it go?" a colleague asks. "It was a total flog," I reply. I don't have to say anything more.)

But other times everything unfolds effortlessly. You take the needle. You stick the chest. You feel the needle travel—a distinct glide through the fat, a slight catch in the dense muscle, then the subtle pop through the vein wall—and you're in. At such moments, it is more than easy; it is beautiful.

Surgical training is the recapitulation of this process—floundering followed by fragments followed by knowledge and, occasionally, a moment of elegance—over and over again, for ever harder tasks with ever greater risks. At first, you work on the basics: how to glove and gown, how to drape patients, how to hold the knife, how to tie a square knot in a length of silk suture (not to mention how to dictate, work the computers, order drugs). But then the tasks become more daunting: how to cut through skin, handle the electrocautery, open the breast, tie off a bleeder, excise a tumor, close up a wound. At the end of six months, I had done lines, lumpectomies, appendectomies, skin grafts, hernia repairs, and mastectomies. At the end of a year, I was doing limb amputations, hemorrhoidectomies, and laparoscopic gallbladder operations. At the end of two years, I was beginning to do tracheotomies, small-bowel operations, and leg-artery bypasses.

I am in my seventh year of training, of which three years have been spent doing research. Only now has a simple slice through skin begun to seem like the mere start of a case. These days, I'm trying to learn how to fix an abdominal aortic aneurysm, remove a pancreatic cancer, open blocked carotid arteries. I am, I have found, neither gifted nor maladroit. With practice and more practice, I get the hang of it.

Doctors find it hard to talk about this with patients. The moral burden of practicing on people is always with us, but for the most part it is unspoken. Before each operation, I go over to the holding area in my scrubs and introduce myself to the patient. I do it the same way every time. "Hello, I'm Dr. Gawande. I'm one of the surgical residents, and I'll be assisting your surgeon." That is pretty much all I say on the subject. I extend my hand and smile. I ask the patient if everything is going O.K. so far. We chat. I answer questions. Very occasionally, patients are taken aback. "No resident is doing my surgery," they say. I try to be reassuring. "Not to worry—I just assist," I say. "The attending surgeon is always in charge."

None of this is exactly a lie. The attending *is* in charge, and a resident knows better than to forget that. Consider the operation I did recently to remove a seventy-five-year-old woman's colon cancer. The attending stood across from me from the start. And it was he, not I, who decided where to cut, how to position the opened abdomen, how to isolate the cancer, and how much colon to take.

Yet I'm the one who held the knife. I'm the one who stood on the operator's side of the table, and it was raised to my six-foot-plus height. I was there to help, yes, but I was there to practice, too. This was clear when it came time to reconnect the colon. There are two ways of putting the ends together—handsewing and stapling. Stapling is swifter and easier, but the attending suggested I handsew the ends—not because it was better for the patient but because I had had much less experience doing it. When it's performed correctly, the results are similar, but he needed to watch me like a hawk. My stitching was slow and imprecise. At one point, he caught me putting the stitches too far apart and made me go back and put extras in between so the connection would not leak. At another point, he found I wasn't taking deep enough bites of tissue with the needle to insure a strong closure. "Turn your wrist more," he told me. "Like this?" I asked. "Uh, sort of," he said.

In medicine, there has long been a conflict between the imperative to give patients the best possible care and the need to provide novices with experience. Residencies attempt to mitigate potential harm through supervision and graduated responsibility. And there is reason to think that patients actually benefit from teaching. Studies commonly find that teaching hospitals have better outcomes than non-teaching hospitals. Residents may be amateurs, but having them around checking on patients, asking questions, and keeping faculty on their toes seems to help. But there is still no avoiding those first few unsteady times a young physician tries to put in a central

"*We have to believe we're not endangered or we'll all go mad.*"

"*I never said 'I love you.' I said 'I love* ya.' *Big difference!*"

line, remove a breast cancer, or sew together two segments of colon. No matter how many protections are in place, on average these cases go less well with the novice than with someone experienced.

Doctors have no illusions about this. When an attending physician brings a sick family member in for surgery, people at the hospital think twice about letting trainees participate. Even when the attending insists that they participate as usual, the residents scrubbing in know that it will be far from a teaching case. And if a central line must be put in, a first-timer is certainly not going to do it. Conversely, the ward services and clinics where residents have the most responsibility are populated by the poor, the uninsured, the drunk, and the demented. Residents have few opportunities nowadays to operate independently, without the attending docs scrubbed in, but when we do—as we must before graduating and going out to operate on our own—it is generally with these, the humblest of patients.

And this is the uncomfortable truth about teaching. By traditional ethics and public insistence (not to mention court rulings), a patient's right to the best care possible must trump the objective of training novices. We want perfection without practice. Yet everyone is harmed if no one is trained for the future. So learning is hidden, behind drapes and anesthesia and the elisions of language. And the dilemma doesn't apply just to residents, physicians in training. The process of learning goes on longer than most people know.

I grew up in the small Appalachian town of Athens, Ohio, where my parents are both doctors. My mother is a pediatrician and my father is a urologist. Long ago, my mother chose to practice part time, which she could afford to do because my father's practice became so busy and successful. He has now been at it for more than twenty-five years, and his office is cluttered with the evidence of this. There is an overflowing wall of medical files, gifts from patients displayed everywhere (books, paintings, ceramics with Biblical sayings, hand-painted paperweights, blown glass, carved boxes, a figurine of a boy who, when you pull down his pants, pees on you), and, in an acrylic case behind his oak desk, a few dozen of the thousands of kidney stones he has removed.

Only now, as I get glimpses of the end of my training, have I begun to think hard about my father's success. For most of my residency, I thought of surgery as a more or less fixed body of knowledge and skill which is acquired in training and perfected in practice. There was, I thought, a smooth, upward-sloping arc of proficiency at some rarefied set of tasks (for me, taking out gallbladders, colon cancers, bullets, and appendixes; for him, taking out kidney stones, testicular cancers, and swollen prostates). The arc would peak at, say, ten or fifteen years, plateau for a long time, and perhaps tail off a little in the final five years before retirement. The reality, however, turns out to be far messier. You do get good at certain things, my father tells me, but no sooner do you master something than you find that what you know is outmoded. New technologies and operations emerge to supplant the old, and the learning curve starts all over again. "Three-quarters of what I do today I never learned in residency," he says. On his own, fifty miles from his nearest colleague—let alone a doctor who could tell him anything like "You need to turn your wrist more"—he has had to learn to put in penile prostheses, to perform microsurgery, to reverse vasectomies, to do nerve-sparing prostatectomies, to implant artificial urinary sphincters. He's had to learn to use shock-wave lithotripters, electrohydraulic lithotripters, and laser lithotripters (all instruments for breaking up kidney stones); to deploy Double J ureteral stents and Silicone Figure Four Coil stents and Retro-Inject Multi-Length stents (don't even ask); and to maneuver fibre-optic ureteroscopes. All these technologies and techniques were introduced after he finished training. Some of the procedures built on skills he already had. Many did not.

This is the experience that all surgeons have. The pace of medical innovation has been unceasing, and surgeons have no choice but to give the new thing a try. To fail to adopt new techniques would mean denying patients meaningful medical advances. Yet the perils of the learning curve are inescapable—no less in practice than in residency.

For the established surgeon, inevitably, the opportunities for learning are far less structured than for a resident. When an important new device or procedure comes along, as happens every year, surgeons start by taking a course about it—typically a day or two of lectures by some surgical grandees with a few film clips and step-by-step handouts. You take home a video to watch. Perhaps you pay a visit to observe a colleague perform the operation—my father often goes up to the Cleveland Clinic for this. But there's not much by way of hands-on training. Unlike a resident, a visitor cannot scrub in on cases, and opportunities to practice on animals or cadavers are few and far between. (Britain, being Britain, actually bans surgeons from practicing on animals.) When the pulse-dye laser came out, the manufacturer set up a lab in Columbus where urologists from the area could gain experience. But when my father went there the main experience provided was destroying kidney stones in test tubes filled with a urinelike liquid and trying to penetrate the shell of an egg without hitting the membrane underneath. My surgery department recently bought a robotic surgery device—a staggeringly sophisticated nine-hundred-and-eighty-thousand-dollar robot, with three arms, two wrists, and a camera, all millimetres in diameter, which, controlled from a console, allows a surgeon to do almost any operation with no hand tremor and with only tiny incisions. A team of two surgeons and two nurses flew out to the manufacturer's headquarters, in Mountain View, California, for a full day of training on the machine. And they did get to practice on a pig and on a human cadaver. (The company apparently buys the cadavers from the city of San Francisco.) But even this was hardly thorough training. They learned enough to grasp the principles of using the robot, to start getting a feel for using it, and to understand how to plan an operation. That was about it. Sooner or later, you just have to go home and give the thing a try on someone.

Patients do eventually benefit—often enormously—but the first few patients may not, and may even be harmed. Consider the experience reported by the pediatric cardiac-surgery unit of the renowned Great Ormond Street Hospital, in London, as detailed in the *British Medical Journal* last April. The doctors described their results from three hundred and twenty-five consecutive operations between 1978 and 1998 on babies with a severe heart defect known as transposition of the great arteries. Such children are born with their heart's outflow vessels transposed: the aorta emerges from the right side of the heart instead of the left and the artery to the lungs emerges from the left instead of the right. As a result, blood coming in is pumped right back out to the body instead of first to the lungs, where it can be oxygenated. The babies died blue, fatigued, never knowing what it was to get enough breath. For years, it wasn't technically feasible to switch the vessels to their proper positions. Instead, surgeons did something known as the Senning procedure: they created a passage inside the heart to let blood from the lungs cross backward to the right heart. The Senning procedure allowed children to live into adulthood. The weaker right heart, however, cannot sustain the body's entire blood flow as long as the left. Eventually, these patients' hearts failed, and although most survived to adulthood, few lived to old age.

By the nineteen-eighties, a series of technological advances made it possible to do a switch operation safely, and this became the favored procedure. In 1986, the Great Ormond Street surgeons made the changeover themselves, and their report shows that it was unquestionably an improvement. The annual death rate after a successful switch procedure was less than a quarter that of the Senning, resulting in a life expectancy of sixty-three years instead of forty-seven. But the price of learning to do it was appalling. In their first seventy switch operations, the doctors had a twenty-five-per-cent surgical death rate, compared with just six per cent with the Senning procedure. Eighteen babies died, more than twice the number during the entire Senning era. Only with time did they master it: in their next hundred switch operations, five babies died.

As patients, we want both expertise and progress; we don't want to acknowledge that these are contradictory desires. In the words of one British public report, "There should be no learning curve as far as patient safety is concerned." But this is entirely wishful thinking.

Recently, a group of Harvard Business School researchers who have made a specialty of studying learning curves in industry decided to examine learning curves among surgeons instead of in semiconductor manufacture or airplane construction, or any of the usual fields their colleagues examine. They followed eighteen cardiac surgeons and their teams as they took on the new technique of minimally invasive cardiac surgery. This study, I was surprised to discover, is the first of its kind. Learning is ubiquitous in medicine, and yet no one had ever compared how well different teams actually do it.

The new heart operation—in which new technologies allow a surgeon to operate through a small incision between ribs instead of splitting the chest open down the middle—proved substantially more difficult than the conventional one. Because the incision is too small to admit the usual tubes and clamps for rerouting blood to the heart-bypass machine, surgeons had to learn a trickier method, which involved balloons and catheters placed through groin vessels. And the nurses, anesthesiologists, and perfusionists all had new roles to master. As you'd expect, everyone experienced a substantial learning curve. Whereas a fully proficient team takes three to six hours for such an operation, these teams took on average three times as long for their early cases. The researchers could not track complication rates in detail, but it would be foolish to imagine that they were not affected.

What's more, the researchers found striking disparities in the speed with which different teams learned. All teams came from highly respected institutions with experience in adopting innovations and received the same three-day training session. Yet, in the course of fifty cases, some teams managed to halve their operating time while others improved hardly at all. Practice, it turned out, did not necessarily make perfect. The crucial variable was *how* the surgeons and their teams practiced.

Richard Bohmer, the only physician among the Harvard researchers, made several visits to observe one of the quickest-learning teams and one of the slowest, and he was startled by the contrast. The surgeon on the fast-learning team was actually quite inexperienced compared with the one on the slow-learning team. But he made sure to pick team members with whom he had worked well before and to keep them together through the first fifteen cases before allowing any new members. He had the team go through a dry run before the first case, then deliberately scheduled six operations in the first week, so little would be forgotten in between. He convened the team before each case to discuss it in detail and afterward to debrief. He made sure results were tracked carefully. And Bohmer noticed that the surgeon was not the stereotypical Napoleon with a knife. Unbidden, he told Bohmer, "The surgeon needs to be willing to allow himself to become a partner [with the rest of the team] so he can accept input." At the other hospital, by contrast, the surgeon chose his operating team almost randomly and did not keep it together. In the first seven cases, the team had different members every time, which is to say that it was no team at all. And the surgeon had no pre-briefings, no debriefings, no tracking of ongoing results.

The Harvard Business School study offered some hopeful news. We can do things that have a dramatic effect on our rate of improvement—like being more deliberate about how we train, and about tracking progress, whether with students and residents or with senior surgeons and nurses. But the study's other implications are less reassuring. No matter how accomplished, surgeons trying something new got worse before they got better, and the learning curve proved longer, and was affected by a far more complicated range of factors, than anyone had realized.

This, I suspect, is the reason for the physician's dodge: the "I just assist" rap; the "We have a new procedure for this that you are perfect for" speech; the "You need a central line" without the "I am still learning how to do this." Sometimes we do feel obliged to admit when we're doing something for the first time, but even then we tend to quote the published complication rates of experienced surgeons. Do we ever tell patients that, because we are still new at something, their risks will inevitably be higher, and that they'd likely do better with doctors who are more experienced? Do we ever say that we need them to agree to it anyway? I've never seen it. Given the stakes, who in his right mind would agree to be practiced upon?

Many dispute this presumption. "Look, most people understand what it is to be a doctor," a health policy expert insisted, when I visited him in his office not long ago. "We have to stop lying to our patients. Can people take on choices for societal benefit?" He paused and then answered his question. "Yes," he said firmly.

It would certainly be a graceful and happy solution. We'd ask patients—honestly, openly—and they'd say yes. Hard to imagine, though. I noticed on the expert's desk a picture of his child, born just a few months before, and a completely unfair question popped into my mind. "So did you let the resident deliver?" I asked.

There was silence for a moment. "No," he admitted. "We didn't even allow residents in the room."

One reason I doubt whether we could sustain a system of medical training that depended on people saying "Yes, you can practice on me" is that I myself have said no. When my eldest child, Walker, was eleven days old, he suddenly went into congestive heart failure from what proved to be a severe cardiac defect. His aorta was not transposed, but a long segment of it had failed to grow at all. My wife and I were beside ourselves with fear—his kidneys and liver began failing, too—but he made it to surgery, the repair was a success, and although his recovery was erratic, after two and a half weeks he was ready to come home.

We were by no means in the clear, however. He was born a healthy six pounds plus but now, a month old, he weighed only five, and would need strict monitoring to insure that he gained weight. He was on two cardiac medications from which he would have to be weaned. And in the longer term, the doctors warned us, his repair would prove inadequate. As Walker grew, his aorta would require either dilation with a balloon or replacement by surgery. They could not say precisely when and how many such procedures would be necessary over the years. A pediatric cardiologist would have to follow him closely and decide.

Walker was about to be discharged, and we had not indicated who that cardiologist would be. In the hospital, he had been cared for by a full team of cardiologists, ranging from fellows in specialty training to attendings who had practiced for decades. The day before we took Walker home, one of the young fellows approached me, offering his card and suggesting a time to bring Walker to see him. Of those on the team, he had put in the most time caring for Walker. He saw Walker when we brought him in inexplicably short of breath, made the diagnosis, got Walker the drugs that stabilized him, coördinated with the surgeons, and came to see us twice a day to answer our questions. Moreover, I knew, this was how fellows always got their patients. Most families don't know the subtle gradations among players, and after a team has saved their child's life they take whatever appointment they're handed.

But I knew the differences. "I'm afraid we're thinking of seeing Dr. Newburger," I said. She was the hospital's associate cardiologist-in-chief, and a published expert on conditions like Walker's. The young physician looked crestfallen. It was nothing against him, I said. She just had more experience, that was all.

"You know, there is always an attending backing me up," he said. I shook my head.

I know this was not fair. My son had an unusual problem. The fellow needed the experience. As a resident, I of all people should have understood this. But I was not torn about the decision. This was my child. Given a choice, I will always choose the best care I can for him. How can anybody be expected to do otherwise? Certainly, the future of medicine should not rely on it.

In a sense, then, the physician's dodge is inevitable. Learning must be stolen, taken as a kind of bodily eminent domain. And it was, during Walker's stay—on many occasions, now that I think back on it. A resident intubated him. A surgical trainee scrubbed in for his operation. The cardiology fellow put in one of his central lines. If I had the option to have someone more experienced, I would have taken it. But this was simply how the system worked—no such choices were offered—and so I went along.

The advantage of this coldhearted machinery is not merely that it gets the learning done. If learning is necessary but causes harm, then above all it ought to apply to everyone alike. Given a choice, people wriggle out, and such choices are not offered equally. They belong to the connected and the knowledgeable, to insiders over outsiders, to the doctor's child but not the truck driver's. If everyone cannot have a choice, maybe it is better if no one can.

It is 2 P.M. I am in the intensive-care unit. A nurse tells me Mr. G.'s central line has clotted off. Mr. G. has been in the hospital for more than a month now. He is in his late sixties, from South Boston, emaciated, exhausted, holding on by a thread—or a line, to be precise. He has several holes in his small bowel, and the bilious contents leak out onto his skin through two small reddened openings in the concavity of his abdomen. His only chance is to be fed by vein and wait for these fistulae to heal. He needs a new central line.

I could do it, I suppose. I am the experienced one now. But experience brings a new role: I am expected to teach the procedure instead. "See one, do one, teach one," the saying goes, and it is only half in jest.

There is a junior resident on the service. She has done only one or two lines before. I tell her about Mr. G. I ask her if she is free to do a new line. She misinterprets this as a question. She says she still has patients to see and a case coming up later. Could I do the line? I tell her no. She is unable to hide a grimace. She is burdened, as I was burdened, and perhaps frightened, as I was frightened.

She begins to focus when I make her talk through the steps—a kind of dry run, I figure. She hits nearly all the steps, but forgets about checking the labs and about Mr. G.'s nasty allergy to heparin, which is in the flush for the line. I make sure she registers this, then tell her to get set up and page me.

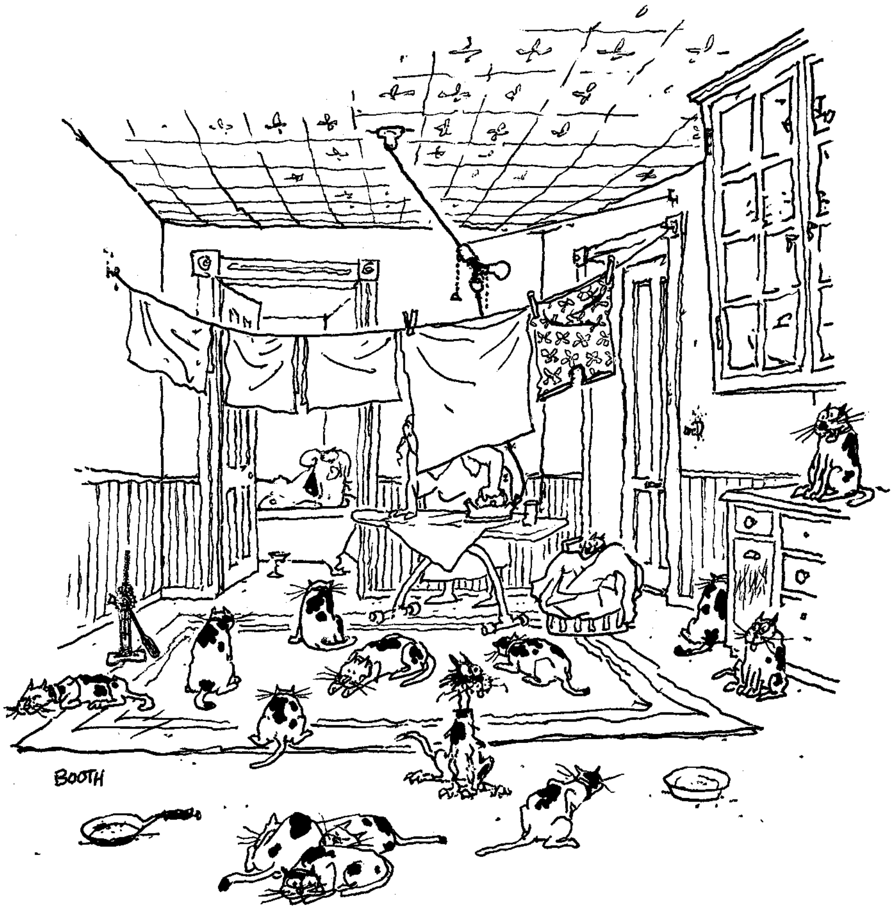
I am still adjusting to this role. It is painful enough taking responsibility for one's own failures. Being handmaiden to another's is something else entirely. It occurs to me that I could have broken open a kit and had her do an actual dry run. Then again maybe I can't. The kits must cost a couple of hundred dollars each. I'll have to find out for next time.

Half an hour later, I get the page. The patient is draped. The resident is in her gown and gloves. She tells me that she has saline to flush the line with and that his labs are fine.

"Have you got the towel roll?" I ask.

She forgot the towel roll. I roll up a towel and slip it beneath Mr. G.'s back. I ask him if he's all right. He nods. After all he's been through, there is only resignation in his eyes.

The junior resident picks out a spot for the stick. The patient is hauntingly thin. I see every rib and fear that the resident will puncture his lung. She injects the numbing medication. Then she puts the big needle in, and the angle looks all wrong. I motion for her to reposition. This only makes her more uncertain. She pushes in deeper and I know she does not have it. She draws back on the syringe: no blood. She takes out the needle and tries again. And again the angle looks wrong. This time, Mr. G. feels the jab and jerks up in pain. I hold his arm. She gives him more numbing medication. It is all I can do not to take over. But she cannot learn without doing, I tell myself. I decide to let her have one more try. ♦



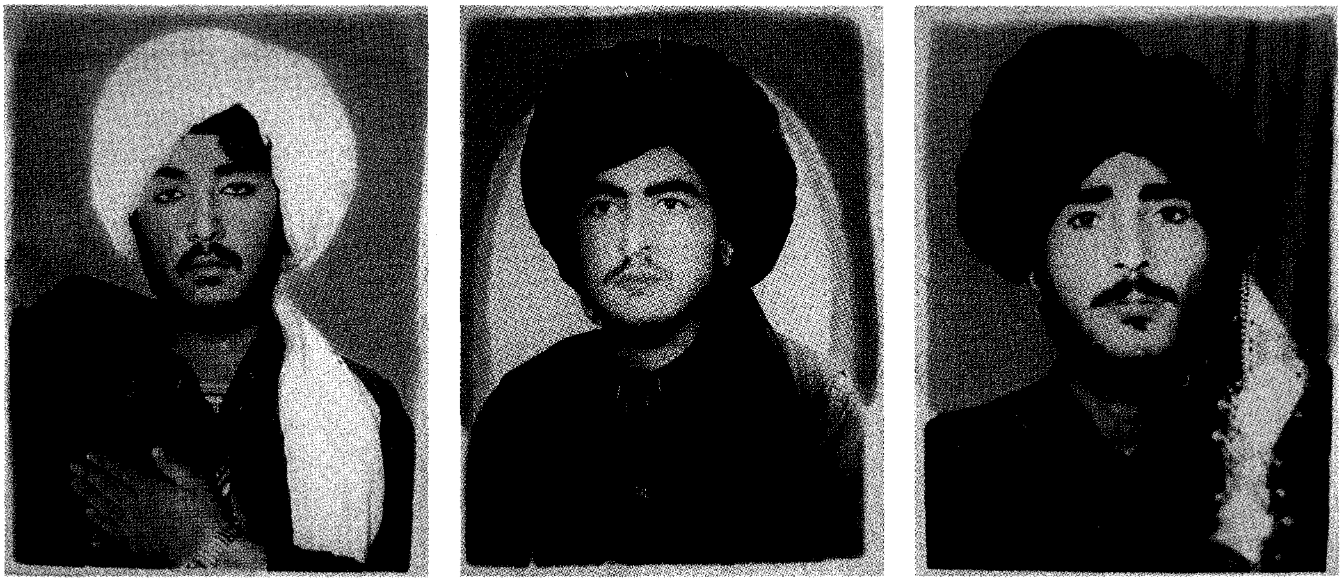
"My voices told me to just relax today!"

LETTER FROM AFGHANISTAN

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

The city of Kandahar, post-Taliban, is full of reminders that the Taliban were not always what they seemed to be.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON



The Photo Shah Zada shop in Kandahar specializes in gaudily retouched portraits. These were documented by Thomas Dworzak.

MAGNUM

In the winter of 1988-89, I spent a month in a mujahideen camp in the Argandhab Valley, a few miles north of Kandahar. The Soviets had begun to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan, but MIG warplanes were still carrying out daily bombing and strafing runs, and in the slummy southern suburbs of Kandahar there was a front line where both sides were dug in. The commander of the camp, Mullah Naquibullah, known as Naquib, was a tall, beefy fellow, the chief of Kandahar's second-largest tribe, the Alokozai. He had installed about thirty of his fighters on the outskirts of his home village of Charqulba. The village itself was mostly destroyed and abandoned; nearly all the inhabitants had fled to refugee camps in Pakistan. The only civilians in the area were a few Kutchi nomad families who wandered around with their camels and herds of goats. The desert was pocked from years of Soviet bombardment, and unexploded rockets stuck out of the earth at odd angles here and there, like children's arrows. Naquib's camp consisted of half a dozen flat-roofed mud huts and a prayer ground in the midst of vineyards. The day before I arrived, a bomb had landed nearby, leaving a huge crater in which a beautiful black stallion lay dead, its hooves in the air.

The war, such as it was, was fairly abstract by then. You could see bombs exploding in the distance most days, but there was no real threat of ground attacks from the besieged government garrison, and Mullah Naquib pretty much had the run of the Argandhab Valley. His mujahideen prayed diligently five times a day, and, given their devotion and their abstinent way of life, I began to think of them as warrior monks.

One day Naquib sent me off to observe a court session led by two elderly Islamic scholars who were charged with imposing Sharia, religious law, in the region. I was driven at breakneck speed along a bombed-out road by a young man who played tapes of wailing Kandahari love songs at high volume on the cassette deck of a Toyota pickup truck. The court was set up out-of-doors, in the shade of a raisin-storage silo. The judges leaned on pillows propped up against the silo walls and told me how they followed the Koran in reaching verdicts about territorial rights, adultery, theft, and so forth. After some bickering over numbers, they agreed that they had put eighteen murderers to death. Their discourse on justice went on for some time, and then the younger of the two produced a piece of paper and announced that a new edict was being sent to all the mujahideen commanders in the region. Crime had increased, and this was due, they believed, to the playing of recorded music, which was banned from now on.

The ban obviously came as a shock to the mujahideen who had accompanied me. They looked embarrassed but didn't say much, and we left as soon as the court broke for lunch. Driving back to Naquib's camp, the young driver pointedly inserted a tape into the cassette deck and turned the volume up even louder than it had been before. I learned later that Naquib told his men that he was not going to make a big issue of the new edict. He said that they could continue to play music, but only

Despite a religious ban on reproductions of the human image, many Taliban had their photographs taken, often with close friends.

when they were in camp, and that they should keep it low. Meanwhile, he told the judges that he would comply with their order. Naquib's pragmatic way of dealing with the situation seemed to me admirable.

I thought of that rustic court recently when I visited Mullah Naquib in Kandahar, where he has been living on and off since 1992, when the Communist-backed Afghan regime was finally defeated. Naquib is a controversial figure in Kandahar because of his relationship with the Taliban. When Burhanuddin Rabbani was President of Afghanistan, Naquib was made the supreme military commander of Kandahar, but in 1994 he turned the city over to the Taliban. Many people believe that he was also involved in the recent, unexplained disappearance of the Taliban from Kandahar, and they blame him especially for the escape of Mullah Omar.

Naquib didn't remember me at first, but when he did he seemed pleased, and he began introducing me as a friend from the old days of the jihad against the Soviets. Naquib has aged badly; although he is only forty-seven, he looks much older. He wears glasses now, and his long black beard is streaked with gray. He has a bad cough. We reminisced for a while, and he offered to take me back to the Argandhab Valley to revisit the mujahideen camp where we had met more than a decade earlier. The next day, followed by a dozen or so bodyguards, he led me to the carport in his living compound, where two late-model S.U.V.s were parked. We got into a pearl-colored VX Limited Edition Toyota Land Cruiser, and several small boys, the youngest of Naquib's eleven children, climbed into the back. The Toyota had a sunroof and a luxurious tan leather interior, and a CD player with an LCD display. It was a fine car, I said to Naquib. He chuckled. "It was Mullah Omar's," he said. "I have ten of his cars."

We took off, and I asked Naquib how he had come to own Mullah Omar's cars. "They were just parked, so I took them," he replied, somewhat glibly. We came to a gate on the security perimeter of Mullah Omar's property, which turned out to be more or less next door. The sentries at the gate saluted Naquib. Mullah Omar apparently owned a hundred acres or so on the edge of town, with about ten acres given over to a compound of living quarters and guesthouses that were surrounded by a maze of walls. We drove down a dirt road that runs through Omar's property, and soon came to the paved road to the Argandhab Valley, a rural fastness where dusty tracks lead off in all directions into the desert and the mountain ranges beyond. Omar's house was well placed for a getaway.

I asked Naquib if he had met Mullah Omar. "Lots of times," he said. He described him as "a very quiet man who never spoke to people."

As we drove through a pass between the mountains just behind Omar's land, Naquib turned on the CD player, and the Toyota was filled with Afghan music. I asked if the CD was his or had come with the car.

"It was here when I got it," Naquib said, opening the CD storage container on the armrest between the front seats. We looked for secular music among the disks of keening prayers, and fiddled with the sound system for a while.

"Are you telling me," I said, when we had made a selection, "that this stuff belonged to the man who put people in prison for listening to music?" Naquib shrugged. "It seems so." The song that was playing, he said, was a popular Afghan tune that vilified General Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord from Mazar-i-Sharif. Its chief refrain was "O murderer of the Afghan people."

"What is life without music?" Mullah Naquib said.

Many vestiges of the Taliban era remain untouched in the beat-up, dusty center of Kandahar, where the ruins of buildings that collapsed during the recent American bombing campaign lie among the ruins of older battles. Venders with carts sell "Super Osama bin Laden Kulfa Balls"—coconut candy manufactured in Pakistan and packaged in pink-and-purple boxes covered with images of bin Laden surrounded by tanks, cruise missiles, and jet fighters. The chaotic streets are full of men who look like Taliban, with white or black turbans and big, bushy beards. They roar around in Toyota

VINEYARDS
ZINFANDEL
Hamilton

"We like you better than Robert Mondavi."

pickups adorned with flags with green, black, and red stripes—the old royalist flag of Afghanistan, which has been revived by the followers of Hamid Karzai, the new interim Prime Minister—and there is no way, really, to know their past affiliations. In Kandahar, as in most other parts of Afghanistan, the Taliban didn't surrender so much as melt away. The leaders vanished, but most rank-and-file members simply returned to their homes. Karzai promised not to persecute former Taliban who stopped fighting, and he has kept his word. Kandahar is officially Taliban-free, but it has an unreconciled atmosphere. The past has not quite been overcome, and the future is unresolved.

The mausoleum that adjoins the Ahmed Shah mosque, which is across the street from the governor's palace, has a special subterranean chamber that *kafirs*, or unbelievers, cannot enter. It houses the cloak that is believed to have belonged to the Prophet Muhammad. On April 4, 1996, when Mullah Omar was declared the Keeper of the Faithful, he took the cloak out of the chamber and, in a dramatic display of hubris, donned it before a crowd of spectators. It was one of the few times that Omar appeared in public. I met only one person in Kandahar, besides Mullah Naquib, who had ever seen him. This was a young man named Popal, who worked at the governor's palace. Popal kept me company one evening as I waited for an interview with Gul Agha Shirzai, who was appointed governor of Kandahar in mid-December. Popal brought me tea, and we sat together on the floor of a large office. He apologized for the lack of chairs, and explained that the Taliban had taken virtually everything when they left—even the carpets. The cheap imitation Persian we were sitting on, he said, had been bought in the bazaar. "And those"—he pointed to some computer monitors, keyboards, and printers—"we got from some of the Arabs' houses." He was referring to members of Al Qaeda, several hundred of whom had lived in Kandahar. I noticed that none of the computers had towers. "The Americans who have a base here, just behind the palace," Popal said, "are checking the hard drives for information, and when they are done they will give them to us."

The city was crawling with Americans, mostly marines, who drove around in heavily armed convoys of sand-colored Humvees, their guns pointed and their faces masked by black balaclavas. There were also small groups of weather-beaten Special Forces commandos, who wore Afghan clothes and drove Toyota four-wheel-drive pickups. From a distance, they were hard to distinguish from the many mujahideen fighters in town. They kept to themselves.

Popal had worked at the palace under the Taliban, too. It was hard to find a job in Kandahar. His long-term goal, he said, was to improve his English, so that he could become an English-Pashto translator, and also to learn computer programming. These were both things that had been nearly impossible to do under the Taliban. "The Taliban wanted us to learn Arabic. They let us work with computers, but we could not use CDs or any programs that showed human images." He said that once, a few years back, he had been stopped by the Taliban's religious police, who said that his beard was too short. They had taken him to a building and told him that his head was going to be shaved as punishment. "The building had no running water, but there was a drainage ditch outside, full of sewage, and they made me wet my hair from it and they used a razor to shave my head. It was very dirty water."

Popal said that many Taliban officials had fled to the nearby Pakistani city of Quetta, and a few days earlier several of them, including the Taliban minister of justice, had dispatched representatives to Kandahar to meet with the new governor. "You see, the Pakistani authorities are now bothering them, saying they must leave Pakistan. So they sent their people to meet with Mr. Gul Agha Shirzai and they told him where they had hidden weapons and vehicles in Kandahar. And they asked Mr. Gul Agha Shirzai to ask the Pakistani authorities, on their behalf, to allow them to stay there. He has sent those letters today, I believe." This was a couple of weeks before the Taliban minister of justice and other Taliban officials turned up in Kandahar and were sent home by Gul Agha, much to the dismay of the Americans.

Popal had met Mullah Omar at the governor's palace. "I remember he arrived in a Toyota Corolla that belonged to someone else," Popal said. "A normal car. He came here because the father of one of the officials was ill and he wanted to wish him well. He was very quiet, gentle. He seemed to me like a good man, not like those other Taliban who shaved my head with the drainage water."

The austerity of the Taliban was particularly anomalous in the Pashtun homelands of eastern and southern Afghanistan, of which Kandahar is the prin-

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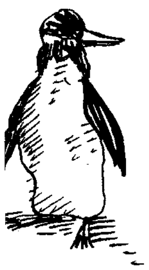


He wanted to make the desert bloom. Scores of young shade saplings were planted along the driveways, and there were several flower gardens inside the compound. At one of the guesthouses, a tanker truck pumped water onto a bed of geraniums. The words "Donated by UNICEF to Kandahar Water Supply Department" were written on the side of the truck. The men holding the hose told me that they had been coming to water Omar's gardens for some time.

A pickup truck came by. Several RPG anti-tank rockets stood upright on either side of the cab, and an armed American wearing a black turban was sitting in the back. A U.S. soldier who appeared to be in his late thirties told me that the part of the compound in front of me was off limits but that I could walk around the part where Mullah Omar's living quarters were. "You can't miss it," he said. "It's the place that looks like Motel 6."

In front of Omar's house there is a small concrete mosque with several minarets, domed cupolas, and pillars with huge flowers painted on them. A sculpture of a fallen tree and boulders, painted black and green, serves as a kind of traffic island between the mosque and the house. Two or three faux date palms jut up around the sculpture, which seems to serve also as a fountain, although it was dry on the day I visited. The outer walls of the house are covered with murals depicting lakes and ornamental gardens and more flowers. Omar lived with his favorite wife in a private apartment on one side of the house, painted, for the most part, pink and green. The floor is covered with plastic terrazzo tiles. The bedroom, which is small and dank, has a ceiling fan, a double bed, and two white-and-faux-gilt mini-chandeliers. Several mujahideen were resting on Omar's bed when I poked my head in; they got up quickly and adjusted their turbans. On the other side of the house, I was told, three more wives had lived with their several children. These rooms were much plainer, and there was only one, rather crude flower painted on a wall of the common hallway.

Down the road, at Mullah Naquib's house, one of his bodyguards, a sun-darkened and rough-hewn man in black, showed me Naquib's flower garden in an inner courtyard. There were clumps of carefully tended roses, daffodils, and dahlias, and I complimented him on their beauty. The bodyguard smiled. "This is what we've grown with hardly any water, but you should see it when we have rain."

The day Naquib drove me to the Argandhab Valley to visit the old mujahideen camp, I recognized landmarks such as the tomb of Baba Wali—a holy man whose shrine is on top of a hill that during the jihad was part of Naquib's domain—but there were many more trees than I remembered, and cultivated fields, and more people, too. Naquib said that most of the people who had fled to Pakistan during the war had returned. Now it was drought, not war, that was the problem. We drove along dirt tracks between vineyards, and then walked across fields to where the camp had been. "We've plowed it all under to grow grapes," Naquib said. The only house left standing was the one where he had slept. In the intervening years, he had bought more land. He had inherited only ten jeribs from his father, but now he owned two hundred and fifty, about a hundred and twenty-five acres. He was growing wheat, grapes, almonds, and pomegranates.

Naquib's grandfather, and his father, too, had been the head of the Alokozai tribe, but during Zahir Shah's reign a *malek*, a government administrator, was appointed. Then, after the anti-Soviet jihad began, things reverted to the way they had been. Naquib said that a man named Azizullah Wasfi, who had moved to the United States, is the official tribal elder, but that in his absence Naquib was put in charge.

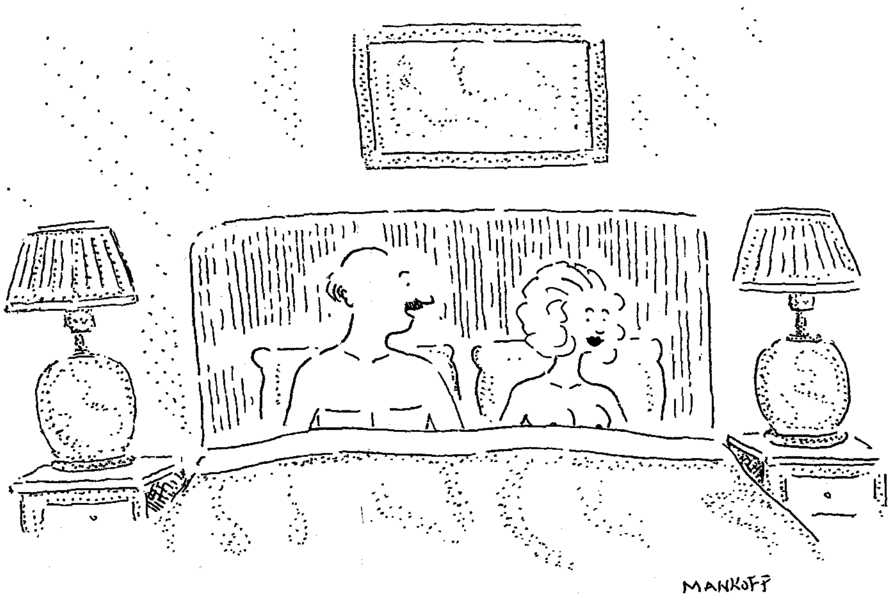
I asked Naquib to whom the tribal authority would pass when Azizullah Wasfi died. "Well, when the tribe appoints a leader, it chooses someone who can serve them," he said. "I am not so interested in doing this, because of health problems, but I will help if I am asked." Naquib said that his duties were "resolving disputes and grievances." For example, he said, "when Mullah Omar decided to leave Kandahar, he came to me as leader of the Alokozai." Almost as an afterthought, Naquib added, "The tribal chief also can call up the men for war." There were Alokozai all over the place, not only in Argandhab but in the neighboring provinces of Oruzgan, Helmand, and even, he said, as far away as Herat.

For a couple of hours, we walked from one sharecropper's home to another. Invariably, the peasants kissed Naquib's hand deferentially. He inspected irrigation systems and asked questions and gave orders. Then we drove to his house, near the village of Charqulba, and sat on large mats and cushions that his men fetched for us. His bodyguards fanned out vigilantly, and we talked about what had happened to him after I left Afghanistan. He was the military commander in Kandahar during the Rabbani regime in the early nineties, "but then the civil war started, and during the chaos the Taliban appeared. When the Taliban movement started, Hamid Karzai came to see me and told me not to fight against them. And Rabbani also called me and told me not to fight. At the time, we all thought the Talib were fighting for the King"—for the restoration of Zahir Shah to the throne—"and they told me, 'You should surrender the garrison and your guns.' Rabbani wasn't sending money or ammunition to me. How could anyone fight against the Taliban under those conditions?"

After he handed over Kandahar, Naquib said, the Taliban ordered him to go back to Charqulba to live. "I stayed here for a few years, and then I was wounded in an assassination attempt, and went to Islamabad for treatment." Naquib pulled up a sleeve and a trouser leg to show me his scars. He'd been hit by a bullet in his left leg and another in his left elbow, and he pointed to his chest, where, he said, he'd received a rocket fragment. The six men travelling with him had been killed; he was the only survivor. The attackers had been apprehended, he told me. "They claimed that it had been a case of mistaken identity. They said they thought I was a Taliban official." Naquib shrugged, and continued with his story: "I stayed in Islamabad for about two years, and Hamid Karzai and I met with some American officials there. The Americans wanted to know about Al Qaeda, so that they could act against it. We also met with the Italian ambassador. They all told us they would not let Pakistan interfere anymore in our country. And afterward, when I returned home to Kandahar, Hamid Karzai stayed in touch with me."

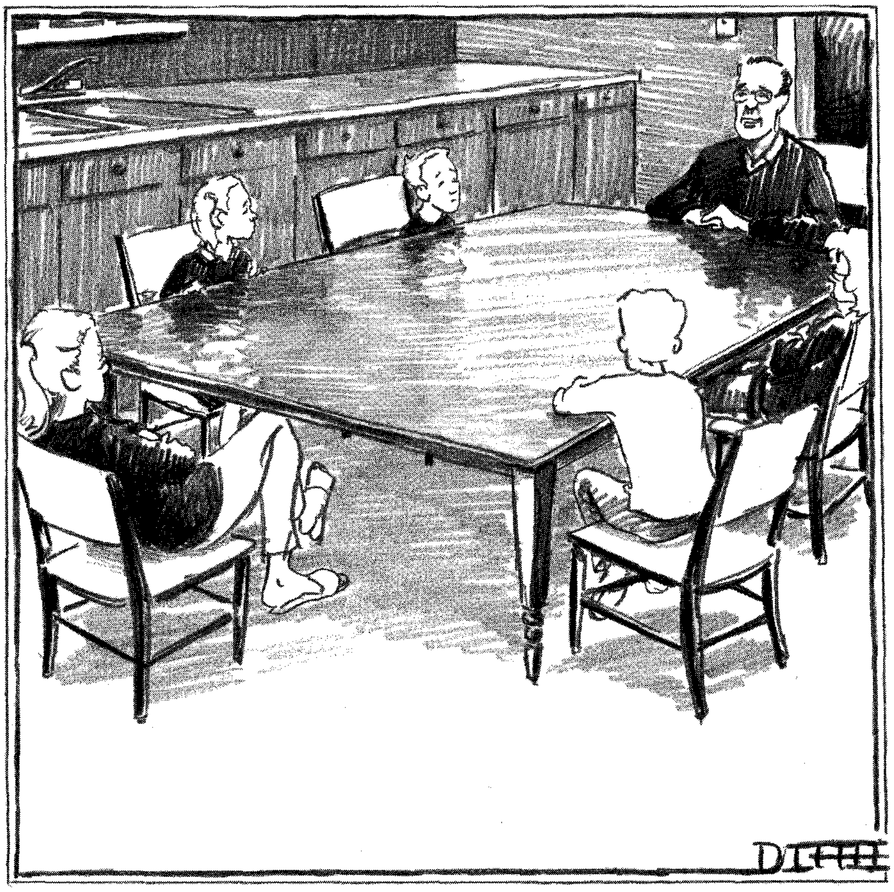
Naquib lived in Kandahar for about two years after his return from Pakistan, he said. "But then when September 11th happened, and the Americans started bombing, I came to this house in the village, and I was in touch with Hamid Karzai. He gave me a satellite phone." In early December, Naquib said, when Karzai was chosen as Afghanistan's interim leader, "Mullah Omar and the Taliban agreed to leave, and Karzai agreed that the Taliban would transfer power in Kandahar to me. But by the morning after the night the BBC announced the transfer, the Taliban had all left. Gul Agha entered the city, and Karzai appointed him governor and myself corps commander. I have some health problems, so I refused the job, and gave it to my deputy, Khan Muhammad."

The competition between Mullah Na-



"*What do you mean, 'Not tonight, I have a headache'? You're a prostitute.*"

quib and Gul Agha had been intense, and many people had expected fighting to break out between them in the days after the Taliban left the city, but Naquib insisted that he had no bad feelings toward Gul Agha, and I didn't press him, because he seemed to like his version of events and wasn't about to change it. He was more candid about his health problems, which were "mental." He had been to two hospitals in Germany for treatment. "I was crazy," he said, and laughed, and all the men who were gathered around now, listening to us, laughed, too, evidently at the memory of his behavior. "I was not myself. I would get tense and have headaches. The doctors told me that I had a heavy workload and it had damaged some of my brain cells." Naquib's symptoms had appeared after the Taliban took over Kandahar, but he said that the problems might have been caused by the explosion of a Russian mortar shell near him during the jihad. "A piece of the shell hit me here," he said, pointing to his forehead. "It was just a small piece, but maybe it had something to do with it." He pulled out a strip of capsules. He had been given a prescription for Risperdal, an antipsychotic. "Each pill costs three hundred rupees," he said, or about four and a half dollars.



"Before we begin this family meeting, how about we go around and say our names and a little something about ourselves."

• •

Early one morning, a gunfight broke out in a residential neighborhood in Kandahar, not far from my hotel. At first, people said that it was a confrontation between Mullah Naquib and Gul Agha, but it turned out that one of Gul Agha's commanders, who claimed that he hadn't been paid his salary, had led his soldiers on a robbery expedition, and the local police chief had foiled it. Things had been resolved by sunset, when I stopped by the governor's palace. The commander had barricaded himself in a police station and threatened to blow himself up with grenades, but he had finally surrendered. He and his men had been beaten and put in jail, a guard at the palace told me.

Gul Agha was receiving visitors in a long room that had a red carpet and chandeliers. A framed portrait of King Zahir Shah was propped on a desk at one end of the room. Four or five uniformed soldiers carrying rifles stood around, and a couple of dozen venerable-looking petitioners sat attentively on red sofas awaiting their turn to speak with the Governor.

Gul Agha is a squat, bushy-haired man with a big belly and a rubbery face. He wore a brown shalwar kameez and sandals, and I noticed that his toenails were long and untidy. He was sitting in a chair next to the door, talking to a group of Noorzai tribal elders from the western province of Farah, an eight-hour drive from Kandahar. They had come to see him because they were having problems with mujahideen who had recently arrived from Iran. Gul Agha smoked a Benson & Hedges Special Filter cigarette and listened to the elders, and when they had finished he told them that he was aware of what he termed, darkly, "the Iranian interference" in their province, and that President Karzai was also aware of it. The problem would be dealt with soon. Gul Agha lisps clumsily, as if his tongue were too big for his mouth. "Before now," he said loudly, "there were commanders with autonomous power. But now I am the over-all commander of the whole area."

While Gul Agha was speaking, a soldier passed out cold cans of Pepsi-Cola to some of the guests. I took one and sipped it and then placed the can on the floor next to my feet, but almost immediately someone stuck his hand under my chair and grabbed it. I turned around and saw a soldier sitting on the carpet behind me, holding the Pepsi and snickering to a friend. I reached over and swiped it back.

When it was my turn to speak with the Governor, I asked him to describe his role in recent events. He had been governor of Kandahar during Rabbani's tenure, although Mullah Naquib, as military commander, had more power than he did then. When the Taliban took over Kandahar in 1994, Gul Agha moved to Quetta, across the border in Pakistan. "I went into business," he said, "trading goods between Pakistan, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries. When the Taliban and Al Qaeda became strong in Afghanistan, I wrote three separate letters to Mullah Omar, advising him not to do what he was

"There's one consolation—he went down with his portfolio."

doing, because he'd bring disaster upon Afghanistan. When he didn't listen to us, we began to fight against him, just as we fought against the Russians. The Afghan people have a long history, more than five thousand years old, and they have never accepted foreign invaders and have always fought to resist them. We have told the U.N. and U.S. troops at the airport that they are here to stop the foreign interference."

Gul Agha then complained at length about how some foreign powers, namely Iran and Russia, were still meddling in Afghanistan by backing fundamentalist warlords, including former President Rabbani. "These men all have the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood," Gul Agha said. They were trying to sabotage the interim government of Hamid Karzai by disseminating propaganda, sending their gunmen to his territory, and generally stirring up trouble. "We want an end to foreign interference in Afghanistan," he repeated. "We want peace in Afghanistan and we ask Allah to help us have honest government. We want rights for women, and we are against drugs and terrorism. My greatest hope and wish is that there will be a broad-based government in Afghanistan without friction between different groups."

The Governor sat back in his chair, apparently satisfied with his oration.

Since he had brought up the subject of friction, I said, what was his current relationship with Mullah Naquib? "Mullah Naquib himself agreed to leave the government," Gul Agha replied, "and he has no duties now." He said that he had told Hamid Karzai that he did not want to work with Naquib. "It was he who brought the Taliban and Al Qaeda to Kandahar," Gul Agha said, and he had helped the Taliban leaders escape. "The world is not happy with him, and the Americans are not happy with him. So maybe he will be brought to justice."

Ahmed Wali Karzai, one of the President's younger brothers, lives in Kandahar, in a heavily guarded house a few miles from the governor's palace. He speaks fluent American-accented English. "I spent ten years in Chicago," he explained. "I opened the first Afghan restaurant there." His Chicago restaurant was one of a family-owned chain of Afghan restaurants in the United States, all of them called the Helmand, after Afghanistan's longest river.

"We're trying to get things functioning here again," Karzai said. "Our main concern is security. We want to get the gunmen off the streets, and we've asked the commanders to have no more than one or two bodyguards." Karzai was reasonably sanguine about the town rivals, Mullah Naquib and Gul Agha. It was just a matter of keeping a lid on things until international peacekeeping forces took over and an Afghan national army was in place.

Karzai was less circumspect about Naquib's relationship with the Taliban. "In the early days, we did kind of help the Taliban," he said. "But you have to understand that in the beginning they were mostly commanders who had fought against the Russians. There weren't any Arabs and only a few Pakistanis." The Karzais began campaigning against the Taliban a little over three years ago. "In July, 1998, my brother and I talked to Mullah Naquib and asked him to go to Bonn"—for a meeting of Afghan opposition leaders—"and even gave him a ticket and a passport, but he didn't go," Karzai said. "He didn't want to leave his land, and he said that if he were to go to Bonn he would not be safe in Kandahar afterward. And I think this was the truth. But the fact is Naquib never took any action against the Taliban."

In November, when Gul Agha was approaching Kandahar from the south and Hamid Karzai was north of the city, Mullah Naquib was given the satellite phone to help him get involved. "But he said he was under too much surveillance," Ahmed Wali Karzai recalled. "All he did in the end was arrange for the talks between the Taliban and my brother. Mullah Naquib called me in Quetta to say that Mullah Omar was ready to talk." Karzai said that it was the Taliban's idea to hand the city over to Naquib. "But it didn't happen the way it had been agreed. We expected them to stay in the city, although we never expected Mullah Omar to remain."

Karzai said that the assassination attempt that almost killed Naquib in 1998 had been ordered by the Taliban security chief. They had done an investigation and had evidence to prove it. An influential businessman in Kandahar told me the same thing and claimed that the Taliban flew Naquib to Pakistan for medical treatment in one of their own helicopters to cover up their complicity in the attempted murder. Why, I asked the businessman, would the Taliban have wanted to kill Naquib? "Because Naquib was the only powerful figure remaining in Kandahar from the time before the Taliban came," he said. "In Argandhab, the people consider him their tribal leader. He represented a potential threat to the Taliban."

The Taliban may have had reservations about Mullah Naquib, but in December, when they realized they had to leave the city, they turned to him to make the arrangements. A man named Khairullah, an intellectual in his sixties who is a distinguished elder in one of the city's tribal councils, told me that the Taliban had bequeathed Naquib many of their weapons when they left. Naquib had complained to me that Rabbani had withheld weapons from him, yet he seemed to have them now, and was vague about where they came from, just as he was vague about the acquisition of the ten Toyota Land Cruisers. Khairullah also said that, as far as he knew, Naquib didn't have any serious health problems, mental or otherwise—certainly nothing incapacitating.

One afternoon, a man waiting outside Gul Agha's palace approached my translator, Qias, and said he had an Al Qaeda prisoner to sell. He was holding him in his house and would hand him over for two thousand dollars. Qias came back to our hotel to give me the news. He was excited. "What do you think?" he said. "What should I tell him? Will you pay the two thousand dollars?" I reminded Qias that I was not a Green Beret or a C.I.A. agent. Where would I keep an Al Qaeda prisoner? But I was curious, so I told Qias to tell the man to come see me. He showed up a couple of hours later, and Qias went downstairs to talk to him. It turned out that the man's story had been a lie, bait to see if we were interested. He didn't actually have a prisoner in his house. He had come from a village in eastern Afghanistan about a day's drive away, where, he claimed, there were a hundred or so Al Qaeda members hiding in a nearby cave. The villagers sympathized with them and took turns taking them food and other supplies. He had delivered food to the cave himself a few days earlier. But he was willing to betray the men for two thousand dollars. He would guide us to the exact spot, so we could capture them, he said.

Qias invited the man up to my room, but when Qias said that I was a journalist the deal was off. The man didn't want to talk to a journalist. He wanted to do business. In that case, Qias said, the best thing for him to do was to go out to the Kandahar airport and approach the Americans stationed there, who ran a detention camp for Al Qaeda members. The man thanked Qias and left.

I had been offered purloined Al Qaeda documents in Kabul and Jalalabad, and it didn't seem odd that an enterprising man from a village in eastern Afghanistan had raised the level of entrepreneurship. He must have assumed that if the Americans would pay twenty-five million dollars for Osama bin Laden they would pay a fair price for lesser souls.

Afghanistan was teeming with opportunists. It was not the country I had visited more than a decade earlier, when Mullah Naquib and his men were fighting a rather simple war over ideas of faith and nationhood. Or perhaps it just seemed simple then. Perhaps the jockeying for power, the hypocrisy and naked ambition and mendacity had just not had a chance to flower.

I asked Qias what it would take for me to set myself up as a warlord in Afghanistan. "It would be easy," he said. "You hire a hundred gunmen for a month, get a few Toyota pickups, and you're in business." He estimated that it would cost about ten thousand dollars. Gunmen came cheap, and most of them had their own Kalashnikovs already. In any case, Kalashnikovs were cheap, too. We might, he suggested, spend a bit more to add some muscle. We could buy a few RPG rocket launchers and a heavy PK machine gun or two, for instance.

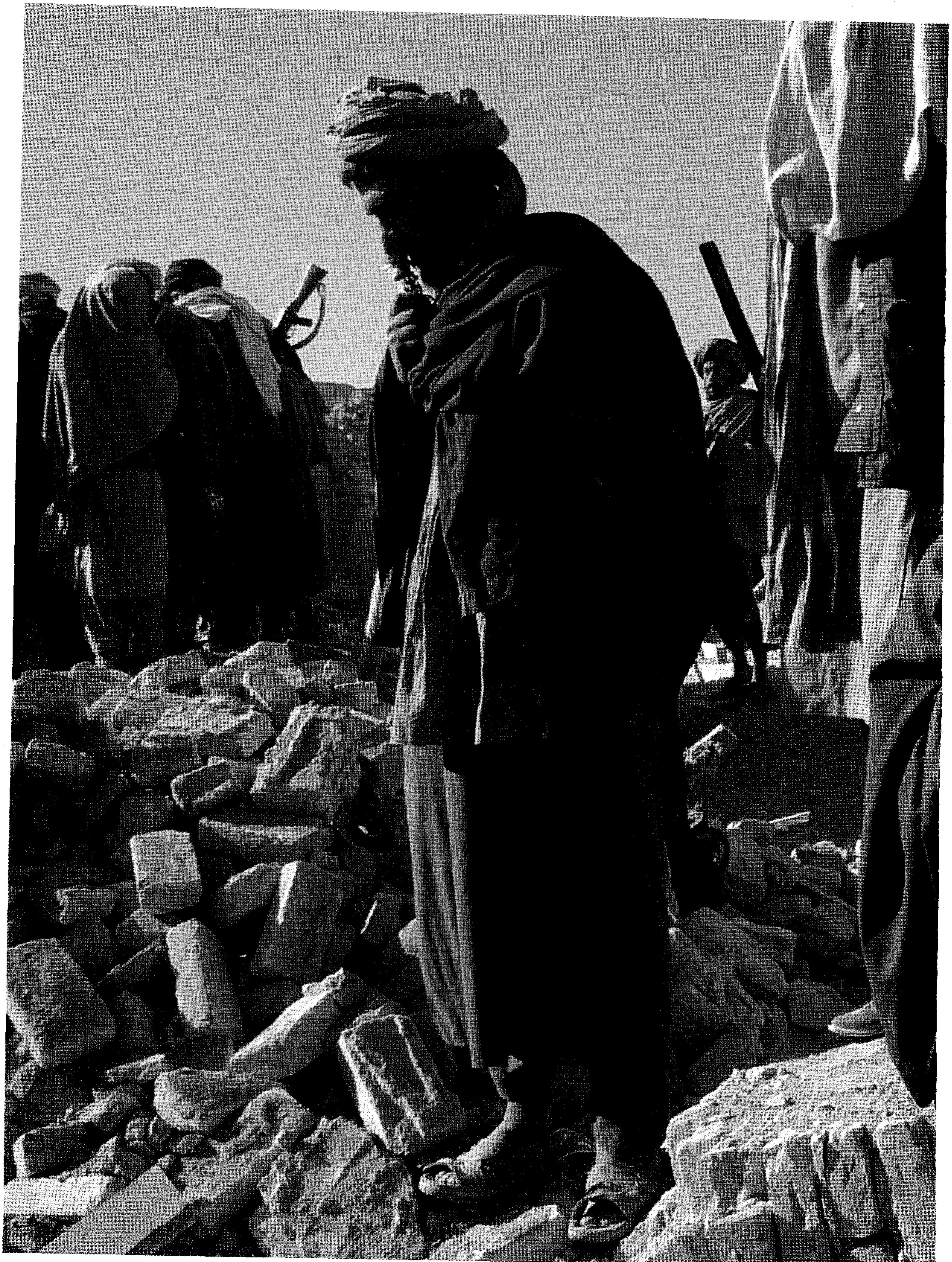
O.K., I said. But once I have this army, what do I do? It is cheap enough to get going, but how do you sustain it?

This was also easy, Qias said. "In the first month, you find ways to make money so that it doesn't cost you anything more." You went to wealthy local people, merchants and traders, and asked them for money, and they paid.

Qias seemed to be talking about setting up a protection racket. Extortion was only the beginning, of course, he explained. Most of the mujahideen commanders in the Northern Alliance, for instance, were also involved in the opium and heroin trade.

Qias is young, maybe twenty-two, and his enthusiasm for whatever enterprise presents itself to him will serve him well in the new Afghanistan, just as Naquib's pragmatism and canny methods of dealing with the authorities have enabled him to prosper and to survive sudden and dangerous shifts in power. I even began to wonder about Naquib's illness, which conveniently removed him from a confrontation with Gul Agha that he probably wouldn't have won. His Risperdal capsules reminded me of Vincent (the Chin) Gigante, shuffling around Greenwich Village in his bathrobe and pajamas, trying to avoid racketeering charges. But then perhaps I had been in Afghanistan too long. ♦

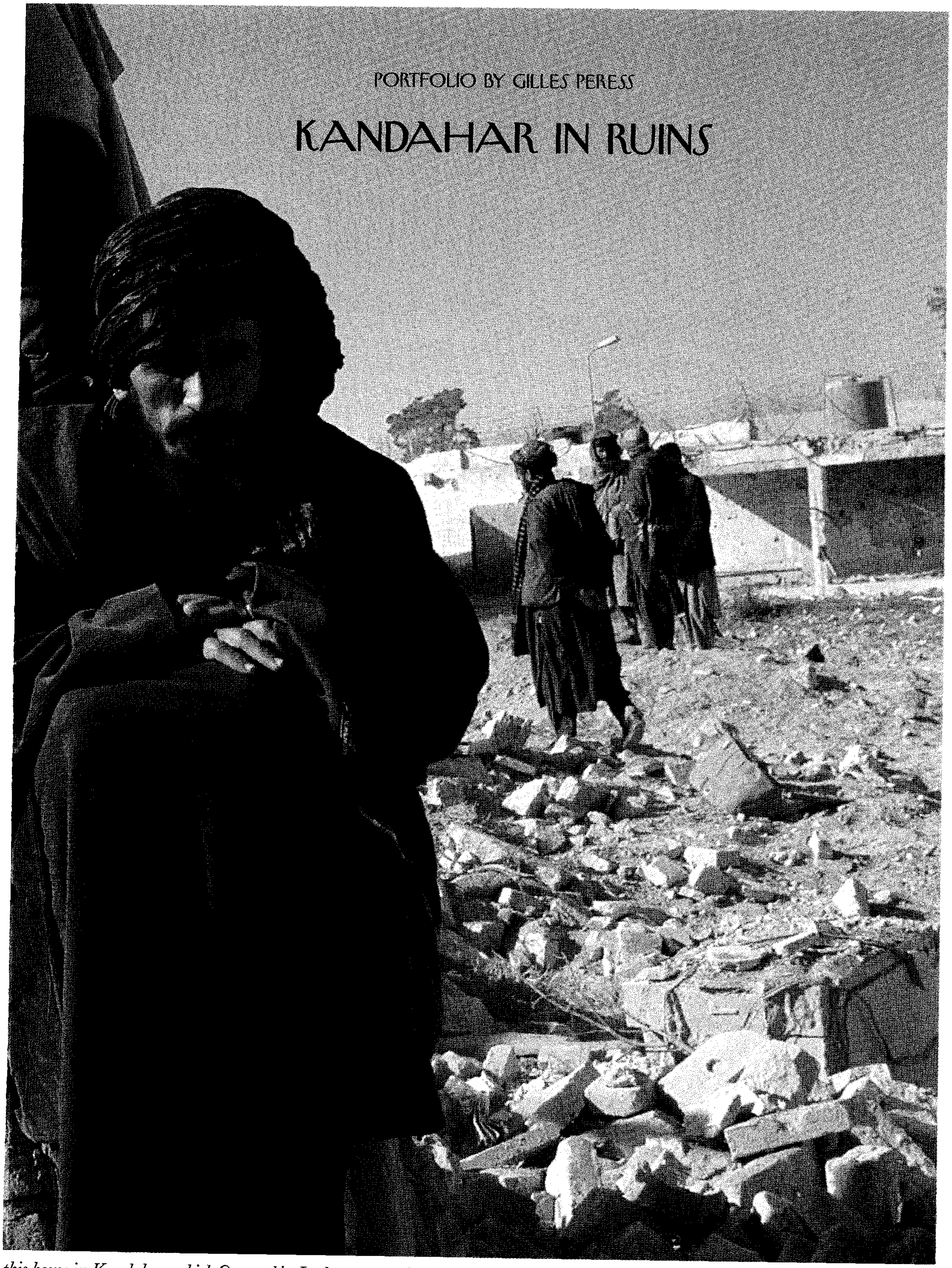
NOT YET
CRAWFORD



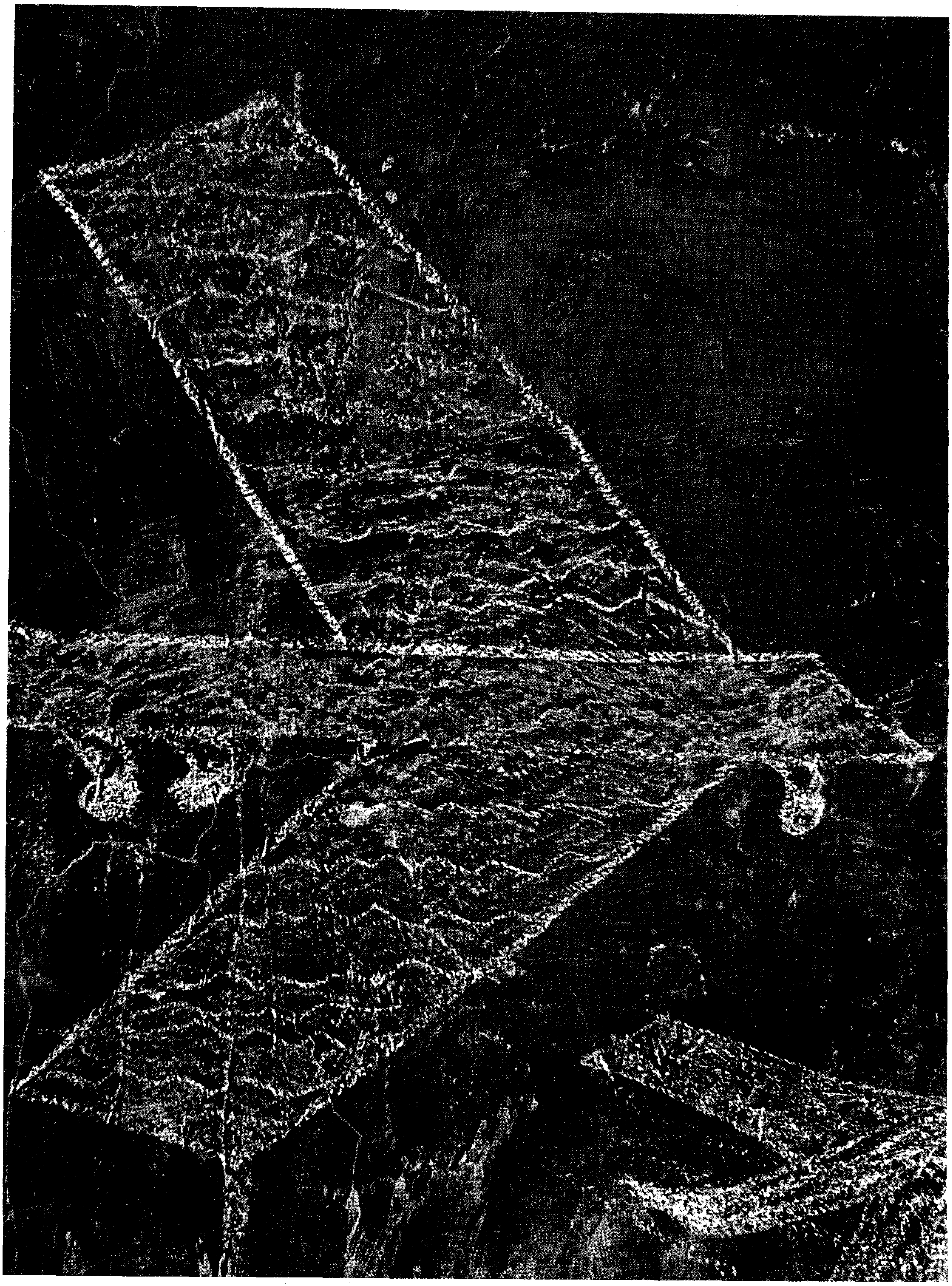
The United States began bombing Afghanistan on October 7th. Air strikes targeted buildings used by Al Qaeda and the Taliban, including

PORTFOLIO BY GILLES PERESS

KANDAHAR IN RUINS

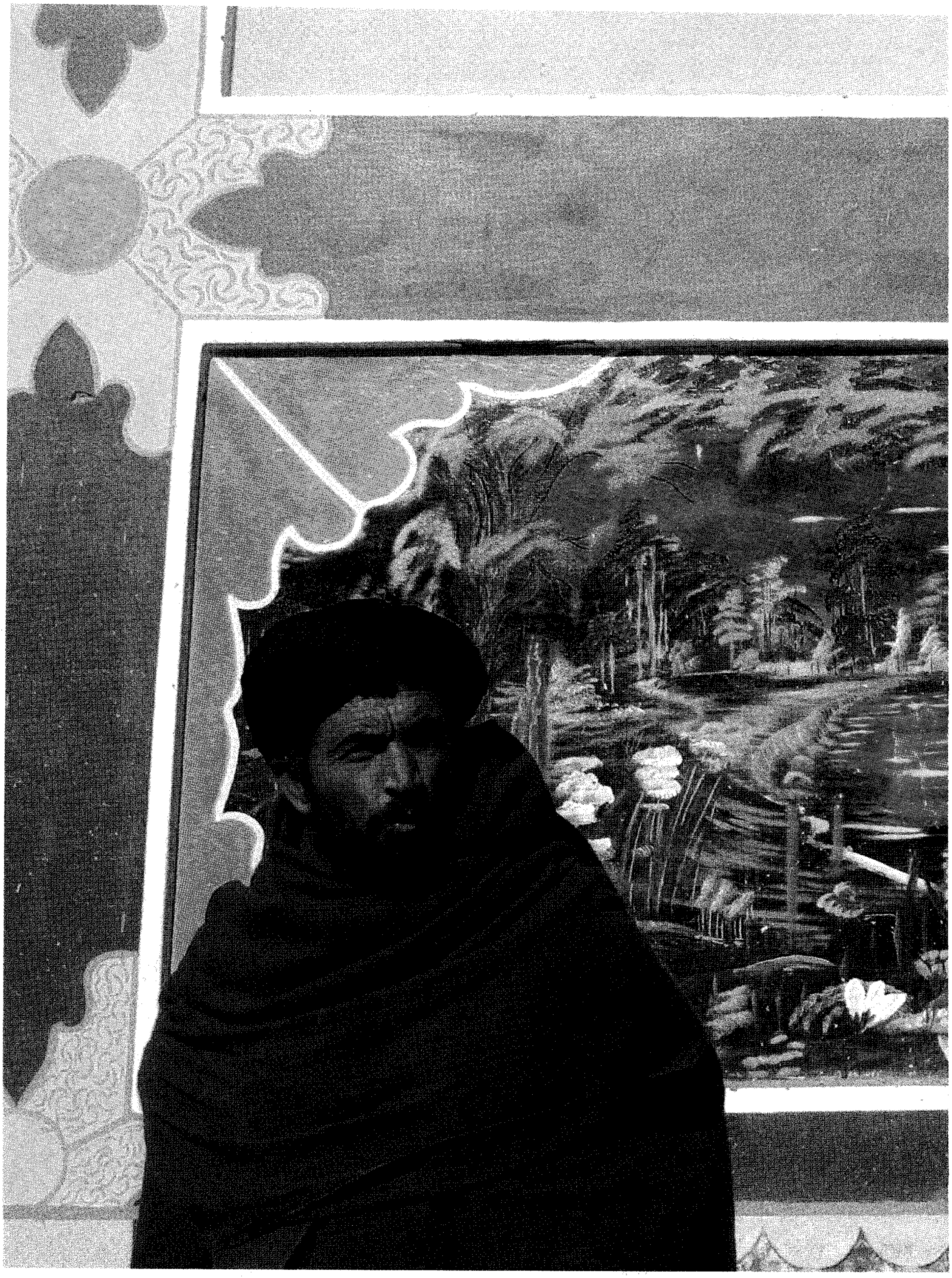


this house in Kandahar, which Osama bin Laden once used. On December 7th, the city fell to anti-Taliban forces.

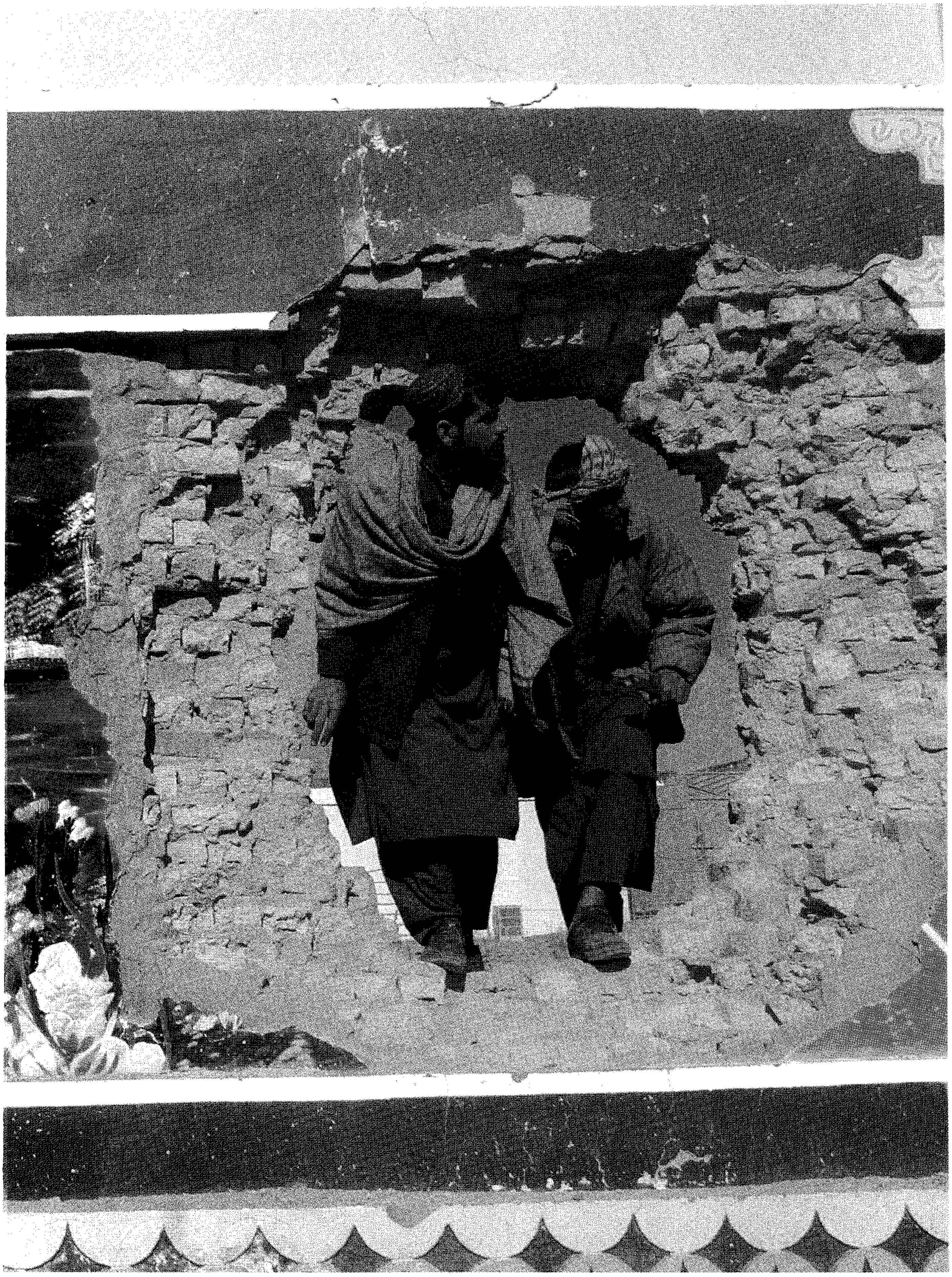


When the Taliban controlled Kandahar, the city's prison held several hundred captured Northern Alliance soldiers as well as Al Qaeda

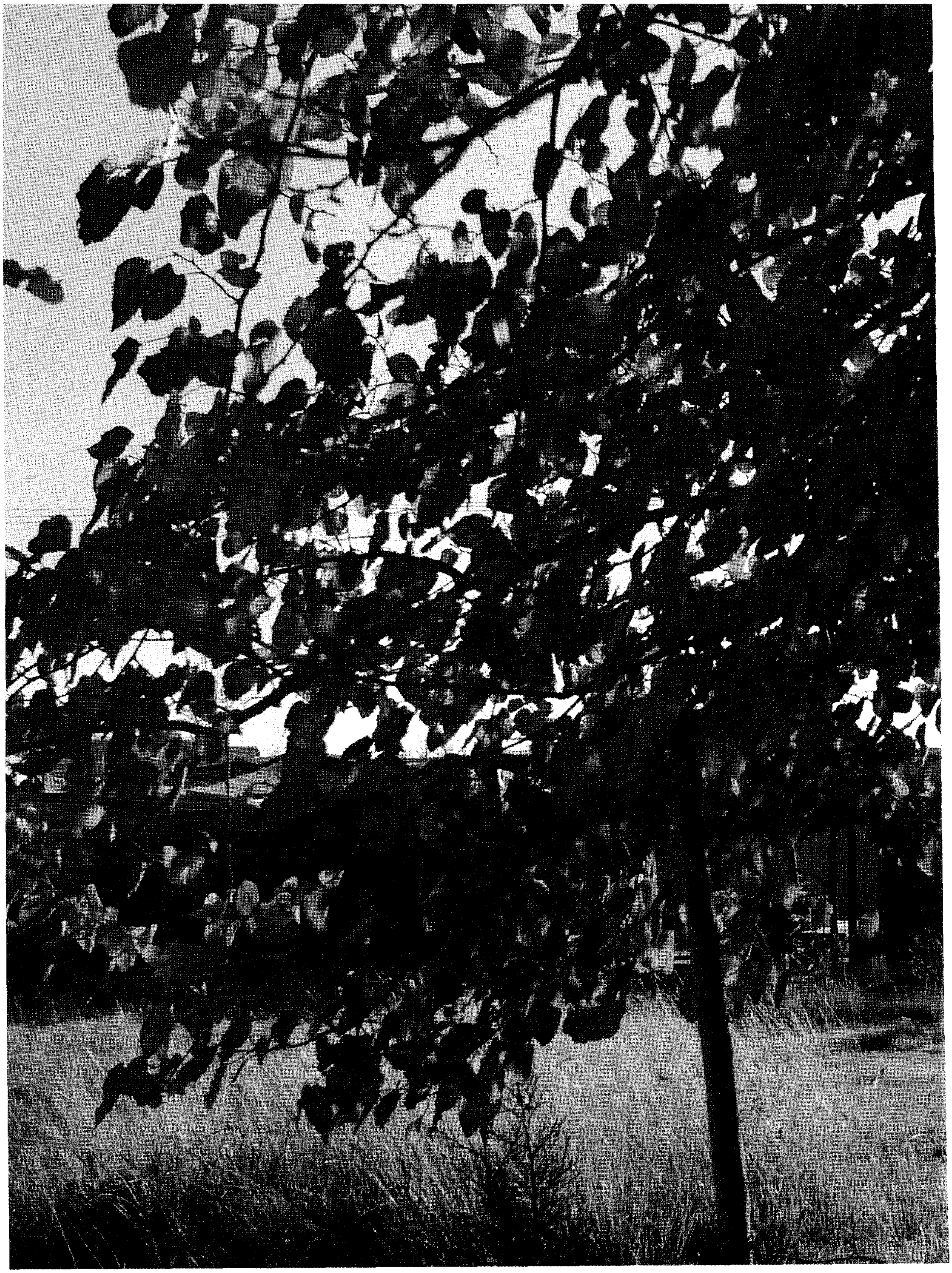
members who were incarcerated for common crimes. They emblazoned the walls with graffiti signed in Farsi and Arabic.



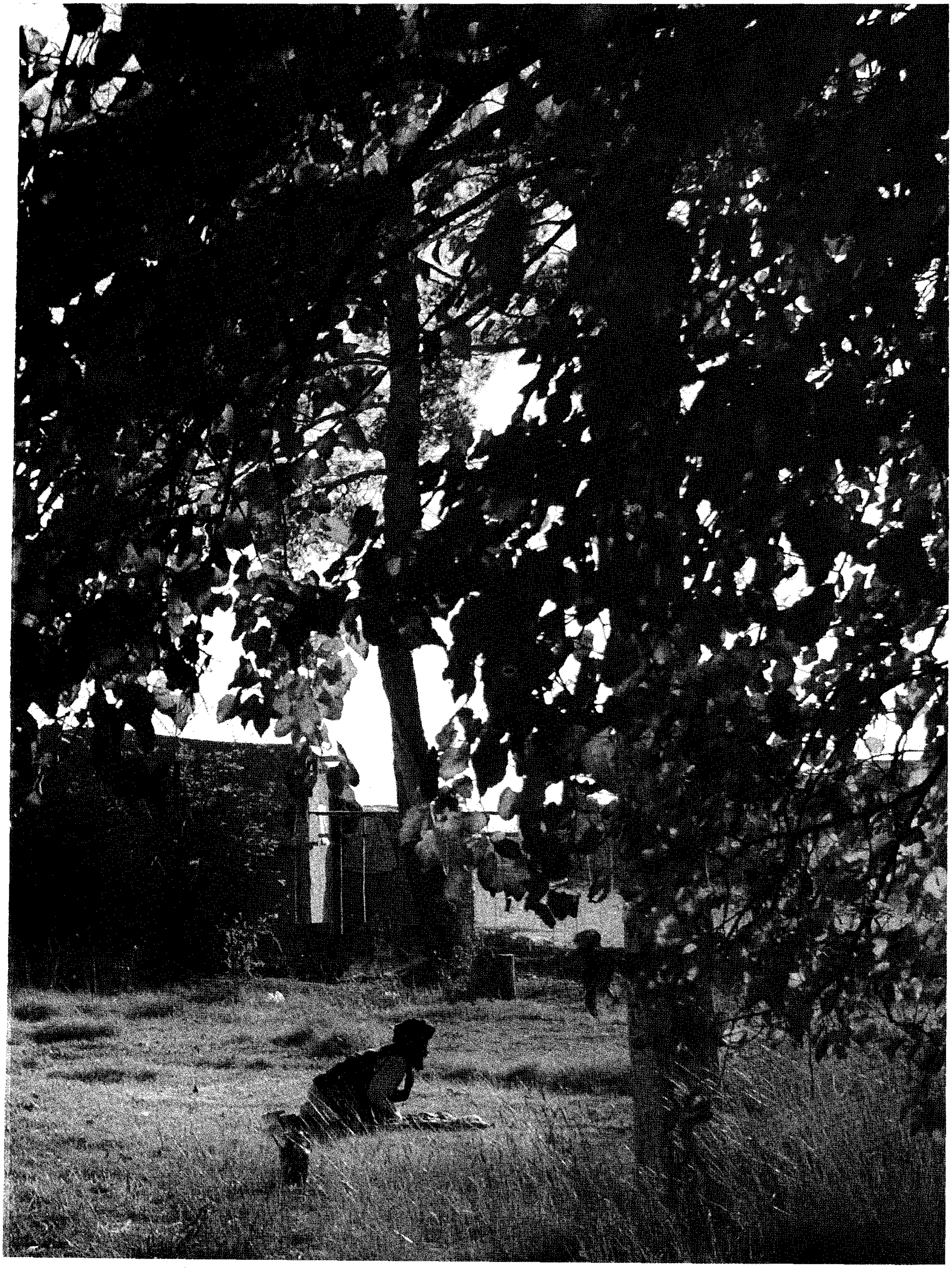
Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, lived in a large compound on the edge of Kandahar. It has several flower gardens, and the walls are



overed with murals depicting nature scenes. Interior rooms throughout the compound are decorated in a flower motif.



The grounds of Mirvais Hospital in Kandahar. Civilians injured in the American bombing shared space in the hospital with soldier



MAGNUM

including a group of Arab fighters who arrived with grenades strapped to their bodies and established a standoff with authorities.

FICTION

MY FLAMBOYANT GRANDSON

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS

I had brought my grandson to New York to see a show. Because what is he always doing, up here in Oneonta? Singing and dancing, sometimes to my old show-tune records, but more often than not to his favorite CD, "Babar Sings," sometimes even making up his own steps, which I do not mind, or rather I try not to mind it. Although I admit that once, coming into his room and finding him wearing a pink boa while singing, in the voice of the Old Lady, "I Have Never Met a Man Like That Elephant," I had to walk out and give it some deep thought and prayer, as was also the case when he lumbered into the parlor during a recent church couples dinner, singing "Big and Slow, Yet So Very Regal," wearing a tablecloth spray-painted gray, so as to more closely resemble Babar.

Being a man who knows something about grandfatherly disapproval, having had a grandfather who constantly taunted me for having enlarged calves—to the extent that even today, when bathing, I find myself thinking unkind thoughts about Grandfather—what I prayed on both occasions was: Dear Lord, he is what he is, let me love him no matter what. If he is a gay child, God bless him; if he is a non-gay child who simply very much enjoys wearing his grandmother's wig while singing "Edelweiss" to the dog, so be it, and in either case let me communicate my love and acceptance in everything I do.

Because where is a child to go for unconditional love, if not to his grandfather? He has had it tough, in my view, with his mother in Nevada and a father unknown, raised by his grandmother and me in an otherwise childless neighborhood, playing alone in a tiny yard that ends in a graveyard wall. The boys in his school are hard on him, as are the girls, as are the teachers, and recently we found his book bag in the Susquehanna, and recently also found, taped to the back of his jacket, a derogatory note, and the writing on it was not all that childish-looking, and there were rumors that his bus driver had written it.

Then one day I had a revelation. If the lad likes to sing and dance, I thought, why not expose him to the finest singing and dancing there is? So I called 1-800-CULTURE, got our Promissory Voucher in the mail, and on Teddy's birthday we took the train down to New York.

As we entered the magnificent lobby of the Eisner Theatre, I was in good spirits, saying to Teddy, The size of this stage will make that little stage I built you behind the garage look pathetic, when suddenly we were stopped by a stern young fellow (a Mr. Ernesti, I believe) who said, We are sorry, sir, but you cannot be admitted on merely a Promissory Voucher, are you kidding us, you must take your Voucher and your Proof of Purchases from at least six of our Major Artistic Sponsors, such as AOL, such as Coke, and go at once to the Redemption Center, on Forty-fourth and Broadway, to get your real actual tickets, and please do not be late, as latecomers cannot be admitted, due to special effects which occur early, and which require total darkness in order to simulate the African jungle at night.

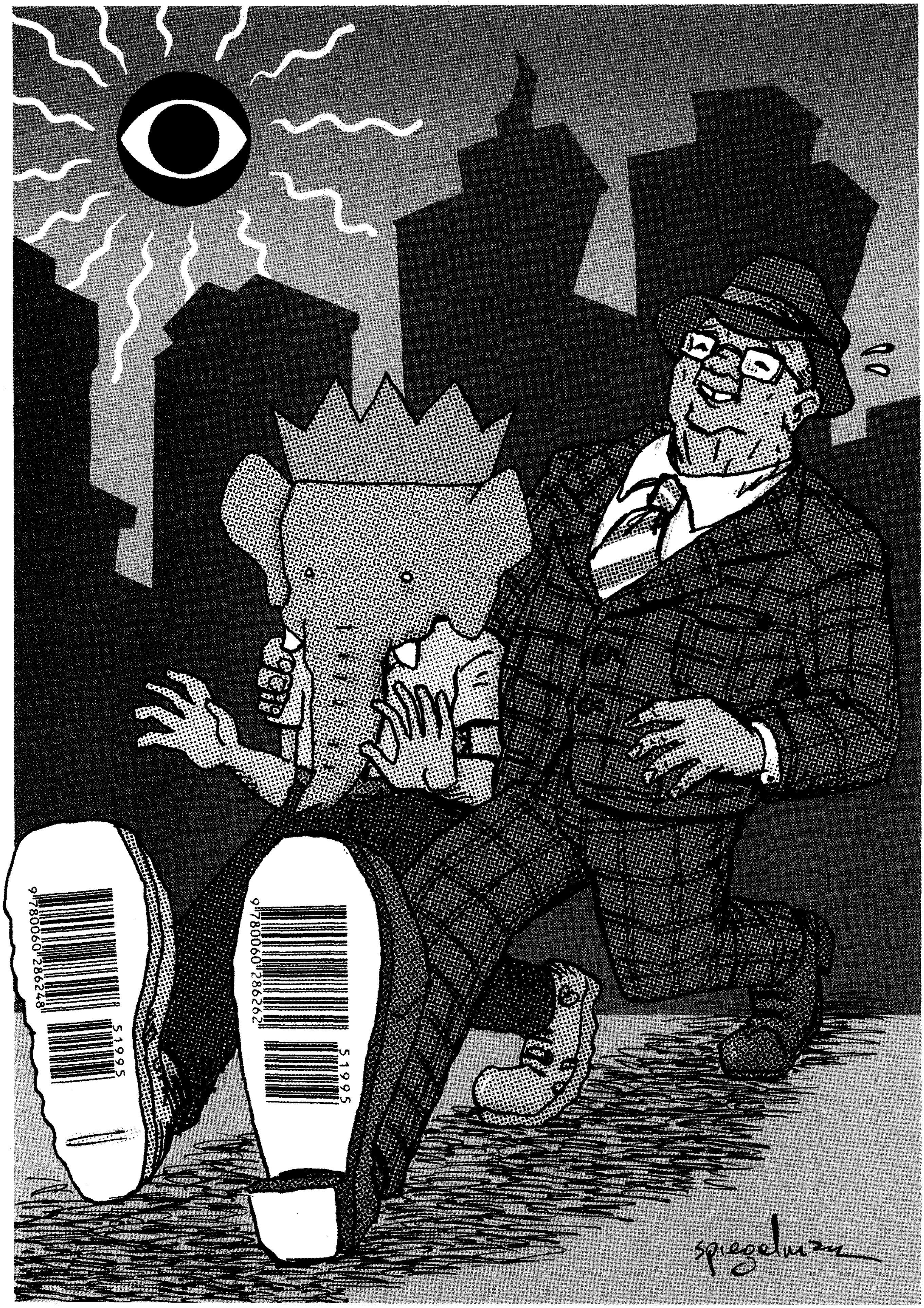
Well, this was news to me, but I was not about to disappoint the boy.

We left the Eisner and started up Broadway, the Everly Readers in the sidewalk reading the Everly Strips in our shoes, the building-mounted mini-screens at eye level showing images reflective of the Personal Preferences we'd stated on our monthly Everly Preference Worksheets, the numerous Cybec Sudden Emergent Screens outthrusting or down-thrusting inches from our faces, and in addition I could very clearly hear the sound-only messages being beamed to me and me alone via various Kakio Aural Focussers, such as one that shouted out to me between Forty-second and Forty-third, "Mr. Petrillo, you chose Burger King eight times last fiscal year but only two times thus far this fiscal year, please do not forsake us now, there is a store one block north!," in the voice of Broadway star Elaine Weston, while at Forty-third a light-pole-mounted Focusser shouted, "Golly, Leonard, remember your childhood on the farm in Oneonta? Why not reclaim those roots with a Starbucks Country Roast?," in a celebrity rural voice I could not identify, possibly Buck Owens, and then, best of all, in the doorway of PLC Electronics, a life-size Gene Kelly hologram suddenly appeared, tap-dancing, saying, "Leonard, my data indicates you're a bit of an old-timer like myself! Gosh, in our day life was simpler, wasn't it, Leonard? Why not come in and let Frankie Z. explain the latest gizmos!" And he looked so real I called out to Teddy, "Teddy, look there, Gene Kelly, do you remember I mentioned him to you as one of the all-time great dancers?" But Teddy of course did not see Gene Kelly, Gene Kelly not being one of his Preferences, but instead saw his hero Babar, swinging a small monkey on his trunk while saying that his data indicated that Teddy did not yet own a Nintendo.

So that was fun, that was very New York, but what was not so fun was, by the time we got through the line at the Redemption Center, it was ten minutes until showtime, and my feet had swollen up the way they do shortly before they begin spontaneously bleeding, which they have done ever since a winter spent in the freezing muck of Cho-Bai, Korea. It is something I have learned to live with. If I can sit, that is helpful. If I can lean against something, also good. Best of all, if I can take my shoes off. Which I did, leaning against a wall.

All around and above us were those

ART SPIEGELMAN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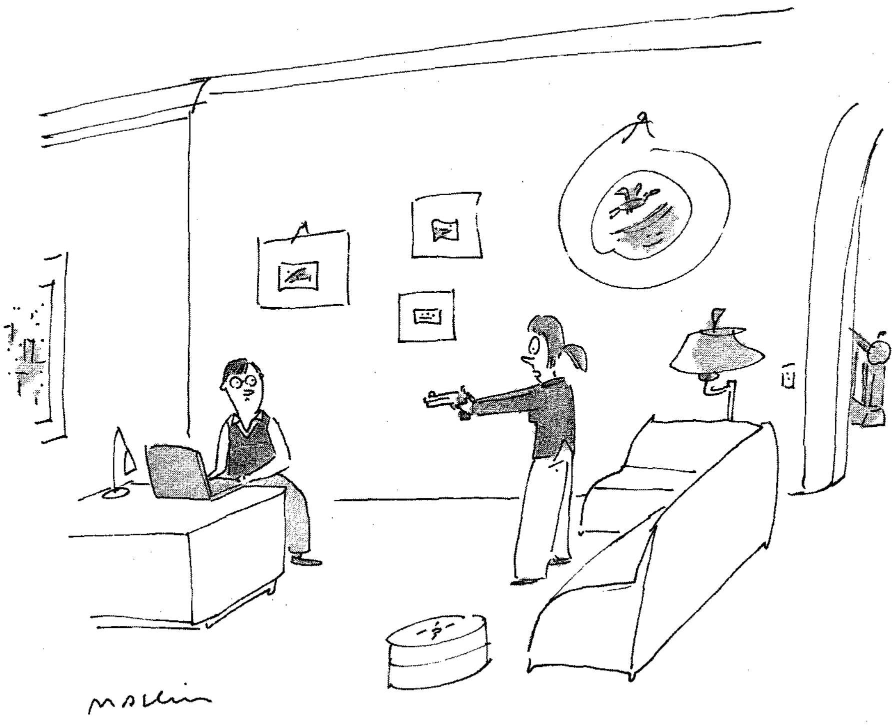

"O.K., step away from the laptop and hold up your end of the conversation."

• •

towering walls of light, curving across building fronts, embedded in the sidewalks, custom-fitted to light poles: a cartoon lion eating a man in a suit; a rain of gold coins falling into the canoe of a naked rain-forest family; a woman in lingerie running a bottle of Pepsi between her breasts; the Merrill Lynch talking fist asking, "Are you kicking ass or kissing it?"; a perfect human rear, dancing; a fake flock of geese turning into a field of Bebe logos; a dying grandmother's room filled with roses by a FedEx man who then holds up a card saying "No Charge."

And standing beneath all that bounty was our little Teddy, tiny and sad, whose grandfather could not even manage to get him into one crummy show.

So I said to myself, Get off the wall, old man, blood or no blood, just keep the legs moving and soon enough you'll be there. And off we went, me hobbling, Teddy holding my arm, making decent time, and I think we would have made the curtain. Except suddenly there appeared a Citizen Helper, who asked were we from out of town, and was that why, via removing my shoes, I had caused my Everly Strips to be rendered Inoperative?

I should say here that I am no stranger to innovative approaches to advertising, having pioneered the use of towable signboards in Oneonta back in the Nixon years, when I moved a fleet of thirty around town with a Dodge Dart, wearing a suit that today would be found comic. By which I mean I have no problem with the concept of the Everly Strip. That is not why I had my shoes off. I am as patriotic as the next guy. Rather, as I have said, it was due to my bleeding feet.

I told all this to the Citizen Helper, who asked if I was aware that, by rendering my Strips Inoperative, I was sacrificing a terrific opportunity to Celebrate My Preferences?

And I said yes, yes, I regretted this very much.

He said he was sorry about my feet, he himself having a trick elbow, and that he would be happy to forget this unfortunate incident if I would only put my shoes back on and complete the rest of my walk extremely slowly, looking energetically to both left and right, so that the higher density of Messages thus received would compensate for those I had missed.

And I admit, I was a little short with that Helper, and said, Young man, these dark patches here on my socks are blood, do you or do you not see them?

Which was when his face changed and he said, Please do not snap at me, sir, I hope you are aware of the fact that I can write you up?

And then I made a mistake.

Because as I looked at that Citizen Helper—his round face, his pale sideburns, the way his feet turned in—it seemed to me that I knew him. Or rather, it seemed that he could not be so very different from me when I was a young man, not so different from the friends of my youth—from Jeffie DeSoto, say, who once fought a Lithuanian gang that had stuck an M-80 in the ass of a cat, or from Ken Larmer, who had such a sweet tenor voice and died stifling a laugh in the hills above Koi-Jeng.

I brought out a twenty and, leaning over, said, Look, please, the kid just really wants to see this show.

Which is when he pulled out his pad and began to write!

Now, even being from Oneonta, I knew that being written up does not take one or two minutes, we would be standing there at least half an hour, after which we would have to go to an Active Complaints Center, where they would check our Strips for Operability and make us watch that corrective video called "Robust Economy, Super Moral Climate!," which I had already been made to watch three times last winter, when I was out of work and we could not afford cable. And we would totally miss "Babar Sings"!

Please, I said, please, we have seen plenty of personalized messages, via both the building-mounted miniscreens at eye level and those suddenly outthrusting Cybec Emergent Screens, we have learned plenty for one day, honest to God we have—

And he said, Sir, since when do you make the call as far as when you have received enough useful information from our Artistic Partners? And just kept writing me up.

Well, there I was, in my socks, there was Teddy, with a scared look in his eyes I hadn't seen since his toddler days, when he had such a fear of chickens that we could never buy Rosemont eggs, due to the cartoon chicken on the carton, or, if we did, had to first cut the chicken off, with scissors we kept in the car for that purpose. So I made a quick decision, and seized that Citizen Helper's ticket pad and flung it into the street, shouting at Teddy, Run! Run!

And run he did. And run I did. And while that Citizen Helper floundered in the street, torn between chasing us and retrieving his pad, we raced down Broadway, and glancing back over my shoulder I saw a hulking young man stick out his foot, and down that Helper went, and soon I was handing our tickets to the same stern Mr. Ernesti, who was now less stern, and in we went, and took our seats, as the stars appeared overhead and the Eisner was transformed into a nighttime jungle.

And suddenly there was Babar, looking with longing toward Paris, where the Old Lady was saying that she had dreamed of someone named Babar, and did any of us know who this Babar was, and where he might be found? And Teddy knew the answer, from the Original Cast CD, which was Babar is within us, in all of our hearts, and he shouted it out with all the other children, as the Old Lady began singing "The King Inside of You."

And let me tell you, from that moment everything changed for Teddy. I am happy to report he has joined the play at school. He wears a scarf everywhere he goes, throwing it over his shoulder with what can only be described as bravado, and says, whenever asked, that he has decided to become an actor. This from a boy too timid to trick-or-treat! This from the boy we once found walking home from school in tears, padlocked to his own bike! There are no more late-night crying episodes, he no longer writes on his arms with permanent marker, he leaps out of bed in the morning, anxious to get to school, and dons his scarf, and is already sitting at the table eating breakfast when we come down.

The other day as he got off the bus I heard him say, to his bus driver, cool as a cucumber, See you at the Oscars.

When an Everly Reader is reading, then suddenly stops, it is not hard to trace, and within a week I received a certified letter setting my fine at one thousand dollars, and stating that, in lieu of the fine, I could elect to return to the originating location of my infraction (they included a map) and, under the supervision of that Citizen Helper, retrace my steps, shoes on, thus reclaiming a significant opportunity to Celebrate My Preferences.

This, to me, is not America.

What America is, to me, is a guy doesn't want to buy, you let him not buy, you respect his not buying. A guy has a crazy notion different from your crazy notion, you pat him on the back and say hey, pal, nice crazy notion, let's go have a beer. America to me should be shouting all the time, a bunch of shouting voices, most of them wrong, some of them nuts, but, please, not just one droning glamorous reasonable voice.

But do the math: a day's pay, plus train ticket, plus meals, plus taxis to avoid the bleeding feet, still that is less than one thousand.

So down I went.

That Citizen Helper, whose name was Rob, said he was glad about my change of heart. Every time a voice shot into my ear, telling me things about myself I already knew, every time a celebrity hologram walked up like an old friend, Rob checked a box on my Infraction Correction Form and said, Isn't that amazing, Mr. Petrillo, that we can do that, that we can know you so well, that we can help you identify the things you want and need?

And I would say, Yes, Rob, that is amazing, sick in the gut but trying to keep my mind on the five hundred bucks I was saving and on all the dance classes that would buy.

As for Teddy, as I write this it is nearly midnight and he is tapping in the room above. He looks like a bird, our boy, he watches the same musical fifteen times in a row. Walking through the mall he suddenly emits a random line of dialogue and lunges off to the side, doing a dance step that resembles a stumble, spilling his drink, plowing into a group of incredulous, snickering Oneontans. He looks like no one else, acts like no one else, his clothes are increasingly like plumage, late at night he choreographs using plastic Army men, he fits no mold and has no friends, but I believe in my heart that someday something beautiful may come from him. ◆

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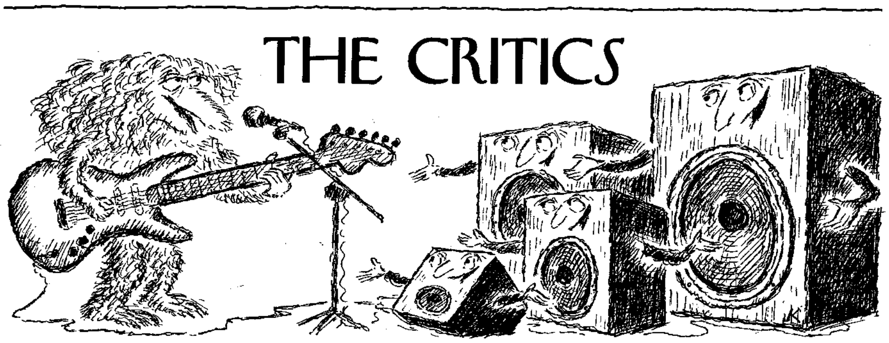


BOOKS

BURIED TREASURE

The impish brilliance of John Maynard Keynes.

BY LOUIS MENAND

John Maynard Keynes died on Easter Sunday, April 21, 1946. He was only sixty-two. His mind had always been indomitable—"He never dimmed his headlights," Kenneth Clark, the art historian, once complained—but his body was easily subdued. He was susceptible to illness all his life, and in 1937 he was found to have bacterial endocarditis, an infection of the heart valves, which, in the days before antibiotics, was incurable. The disease made him prone to exhaustion and collapse, and he had to take precautions to avoid straining his heart. Flying was especially dangerous. But in 1940 he accepted an unpaid position as an adviser to the British Treasury. In that capacity, he typically worked ten-hour days, and he made six trips to the United States—four during wartime—to negotiate for the British. When he died, his colleague Lionel Robbins, who had directed the Economic Section of Churchill's War Cabinet, wrote to Keynes's widow that "Maynard had given his life for his country, as surely as if he had fallen on the field of battle."

The third volume of Robert Skidelsky's biography, "John Maynard Keynes: Fighting for Freedom" (Viking; $34.95), covers the last nine years of Keynes's life. Skidelsky began working on the book more than twenty years ago—the first volume, subtitled "Hopes Betrayed," appeared in 1983, the second, "The Economist as Savior," in 1992. He needs more than five hundred pages to get through the final years; the complete work is more than fifteen hundred pages.

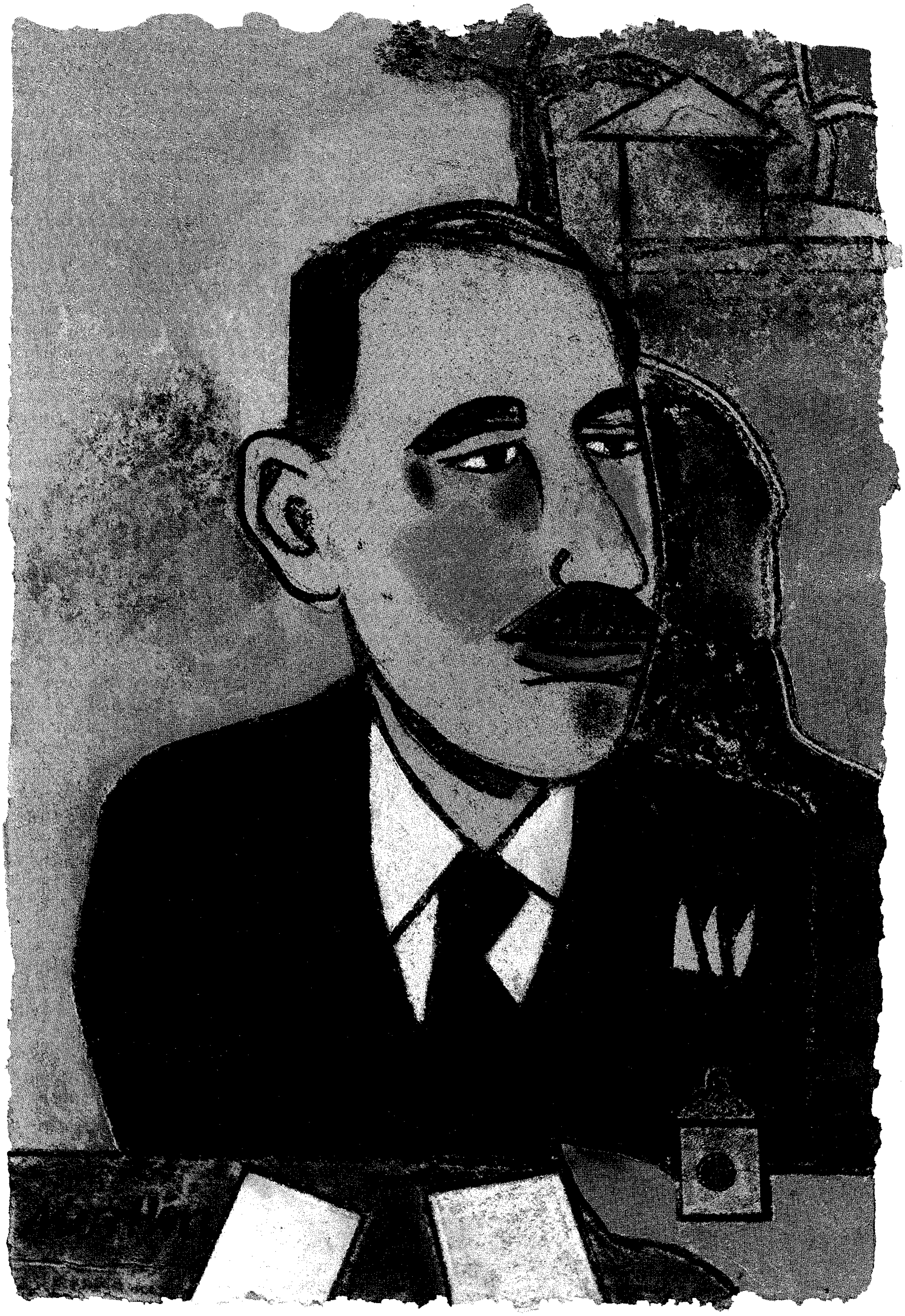
For a man who was basically an academic intellectual, a Cambridge University don, Keynes had a colorful life, partly because he lived with and among artists and writers, and partly because his work was intimately connected with the three major events of his time and place: the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. His attack on the Treaty of Versailles, "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," published in 1919, was an international best-seller, and essentially predicted the economic collapse of Weimar Germany and the rise of the Third Reich. His major work in economics, "The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money," which appeared in 1936, became the standard analysis of the Depression and the foundation of modern economic policy and macroeconomic theory. He helped shape Britain's financial relations with the United States in the period of Lend-Lease and afterward, and his leadership at the Bretton Woods conference, in 1944, helped create the postwar international monetary system—specifically, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Still, fifteen hundred pages is in the superheavyweight category. Per-page marginal utility, it's true, is unusually high. At some point, Skidelsky must have decided that since his story, however else it turned out, was not going to be short, he might as well analyze everything. And he does, with an intelligence and a command that are very impressive, and that can also, like his subject's, be a little daunting. Writing was one of Keynes's special gifts. So was speaking. His powers of expression made him arrogant: he knew that he could outtalk and outsmart anyone in the room (as Kenneth Clark evidently learned the hard way). But those powers were what gave him his influence on people and events. His reasoning seemed so much *clearer* than everyone else's, and he could keep on reasoning long after other people had lapsed into platitude and incoherence. He was indefatigably lucid. Skidelsky is a good writer, but he is not Keynes, and some readers may find his exegeses of economic ideas and the ins and outs of lengthy policy debates technical, dense, and assumptive.

On the other hand, there is a big compensation. "If this biography has rescued Keynes from the economists, and placed him in the world of history where he properly belongs," Skidelsky says in the introduction to the final volume, "it will have achieved its aim." By "the world of history," he doesn't mean only the political and economic events of the first half of the twentieth century, the Depression and the wars. He means the history of art and thought, mores and morality—the emergence of a modern culture, our culture.

Everything seemed to come easily to Keynes, and many of the people who have written about him mistakenly imagine him as a kind of polymathic, all-around genius who would have produced important work in any field he chose to take up. Keynes was a friend of Bertrand Russell and (to the extent that anyone could be) of Ludwig Wittgenstein; Russell thought that Keynes had the sharpest mind he had ever encountered. But Keynes was not a philosopher. The first book he began writing was on probability, which he treated as a branch of logic. He spent fifteen years, off and on, working at it. By the time it appeared, in 1921, it was already outmoded: the philosopher Frank Ramsey,

Keynes was a highly cultivated English gentleman and an old-fashioned patriot, but he had the soul of a bohemian.


RICHARD MERKIN

Keynes's friend and Cambridge colleague, demolished its premise in a short essay. And although Keynes produced some elegant biographical sketches, many on economists, such as Thomas Malthus (whom he especially admired) and his own teacher at Cambridge, Alfred Marshall, he was not a historian, or even a belletrist in the class of his friend Lytton Strachey. He patronized artists and he founded and supported theatre groups; he married a ballerina; he collected modern art. But his artist friends thought that his taste was undistinguished. He wrote on economic issues for the newspapers—he had a public audience—but he had little interest in social policy as such, and his political views were (generally) enlightened without being surprising or original. Keynes was an economist. That's where his genius lay. It is Skidelsky's great insight to interpret Keynes's economics as one of the keys to understanding the character of modern life.

A year after Keynes's death, an official biographer was chosen. This was Roy Harrod, a distinguished British economist who had worked closely with Keynes during the Second World War. Harrod did not spend twenty years at the job. His biography, "The Life of John Maynard Keynes," was published in 1951; it was generally well received, and was for many years the standard life. Skidelsky is semi-obsessed with it. He began his first volume with an attack on Harrod's book, and he closes the third volume with another attack, in which he quotes from some of Harrod's bad reviews. Along the way, he points out a number of mostly minor instances where Harrod the biographer got it wrong, and when Harrod the man turns up in the story Skidelsky describes him as "vain, petulant and tiresome."

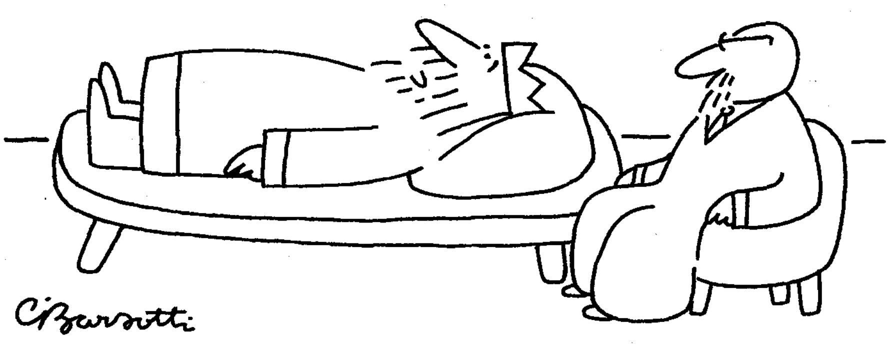
What is the point? Harrod's book is frankly hagiographic. It was written, after all, at the request and with the assistance of the family (Keynes's parents were still alive when he died), and at a time, immediately after the war, when it was natural to treat Keynes as a national hero. (Skidelsky, for that matter, treats Keynes as a national hero, too.) Harrod's biography is smoothly but unctuously written, and its exposition of the economics, though obviously expert, is much more circumscribed than Skidelsky's. It is also out of print. Surely there isn't anyone who doesn't think that Keynes was due for a new life.

There are two areas where Skidelsky is right to draw attention to the way Harrod's biography misled its readers. The first has to do with what might be called Keynes's attitude. Part of Harrod's project was to portray the mature Keynes as a great conservative statesman, a lion of the British establishment. This may have been due to the circumstance that Churchill's Government, in which Harrod had served, was thrown out in 1945 and replaced by a Labour Government. The Conservatives didn't get back in until the year the book came out, 1951, and by then Labour policies had transformed the British economy. Harrod's book is not a polemic, but possibly he was inclined to make his hero exemplify the virtues of pre-Labour Britain.

It's true that Keynes was a patriot, and in some very old-fashioned ways. He was devoted to his school (Eton) and his college (King's), cherishing their rituals, serving on Eton's board, and helping both institutions to manage their finances. He had no problem with the Empire: he believed, as Skidelsky puts it, that "all things being considered, it was better to have Englishmen running the world than foreigners." He became a director of the Bank of England, and he was given a title, Baron Keynes of Tilton, and sat in the House of Lords. But he was never taken in by it all. He enjoyed pomp and circumstance, but he despised pomposity, and loved to skewer it. "Impish" is the kind of word that turns up in descriptions by people who worked with him closely. Keynes was a highly cultivated English gentleman with a bohemian soul. Heterodoxy was the normal vein of his thought—"The Economic Consequences of the Peace" and "The General Theory" are, above all else, demolitions of old ways of thinking—and almost nothing shocked him. Even his literary and artistic friends sometimes found his manners, in private, a little gross and his conversation scatological. Their nickname for him was Pozzo, intended to suggest, among other things, a sewer. As Skidelsky's book makes clear, you can't grasp the full implications of Keynes's work unless you see the imp at the bottom of it.

It is a natural biographical question whether this attitude had something to do with the other important subject that Harrod skated around, which is Keynes's homosexuality. At Cambridge, Keynes was a member of the Apostles—the famous "secret" (everyone seems to have known about it) society that was founded in 1820. Keynes was Apostle No. 243. He was vetted for membership by two fellow-undergraduates, Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf, and he became friends with two other Apostles as well, Thoby Stephen and Clive Bell. They were the seeds of Bloomsbury. Thoby Stephen was Virginia Woolf's brother; Clive Bell (later on) married her sister, Vanessa; Lytton Strachey proposed to her; and Leonard Woolf married her. Bloomsbury was Keynes's most intimate social circle for the rest of his life. He kept house in London with the Bells, and his country house, Tilton, was not far from the Bells' and the Woolfs'. The most important of the Bloomsbury figures for him, though, was Strachey.

The bond was formed on the basis of what both men referred to as the Higher



"Oh, sure, they all love William the Great, but nobody loved little Willie Poopy-Pants."

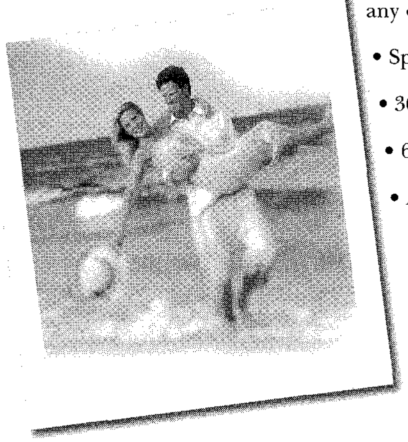
Sodomy—the love of beautiful young men. (It also had something to do with the anxiety both men felt about their sex appeal. "My dear," Keynes once wrote to Strachey, "I have always suffered and I suppose always will from a most unalterable obsession that I am so physically repulsive that I've no business to hurl my body on anyone else's. The idea is so fixed and constant that I don't think anything—certainly no argument—could ever shake it.") When they were at Cambridge, Keynes and Strachey were continually on the prowl for sexually eligible undergraduates who might just squeak through the intellectual requirements and be made Apostles. The atmosphere at Cambridge, at least among Keynes's social set, seems to have been extremely homoerotic. Skidelsky, in his account of this phase of Keynes's life, may not discount sufficiently for Bloomsbury hyperbole in sexual matters: when the gossip was that Keynes had "buggered" someone at a party, it generally meant that an embrace or a kiss was attempted.

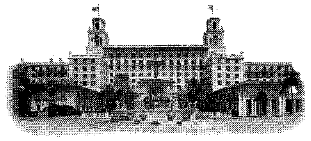
Still, although Keynes's gay life was, to the general world, closeted, it was by no means inhibited. Skidelsky describes a visit by Keynes and his companion for the trip, Geoffrey Scott, in 1906 to the Italian home of Bernard Berenson:

> They all went on bathing parties at which Scott and Keynes dressed themselves in ladies' knickers and struggled over a pink chemise. On their last night Mary Berenson gave a champagne supper which made them all tipsy. The girls dressed in the men's clothes, Scott wore a dress of Mary's with a gold coronet on his head, and Maynard put on a gown of chiffon, with a headdress of pink ribbons.

Still, Keynes found Scott too aesthetic a lover for his taste. "Even in his sodomy, which he takes more solidly than anything else, he seems to want to worship an idealised vision . . . rather than to come to close quarters," he complained in a letter to Strachey.

Two years later, the friendship between Keynes and Strachey was disrupted: Keynes stole Strachey's lover, the painter Duncan Grant, with whom he began a long relationship. Grant was Strachey's cousin—he had lived with the Stracheys when he was a schoolboy—and Strachey was distraught. He abused Keynes to all their friends (which is





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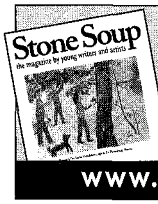

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probably why the Woolfs, highly protective of Strachey, were always a little cool toward Keynes); and although he and Keynes eventually patched things up, the friendship was never the same.

The First World War, inexplicably, seemed to change this whole culture. Virginia Woolf's brother Adrian, who had replaced Keynes as Duncan Grant's lover, suddenly married a woman. So did Lytton Strachey's formerly homosexual brother James. Grant, who had been having an affair with David (Bunny) Garnett, took up with Vanessa Bell, who was estranged from Clive. ("Incestuous" is not far from being the best word for describing the Bloomsbury sexual circus. Many years later, in 1942, Garnett married Duncan and Vanessa's illegitimate daughter, Angelica, a development that even Keynes found bizarre. It was the sort of thing that gives polymorphousness a bad name.) Lytton, whose earlier proposal to Virginia had been withdrawn almost as soon as it was accepted, set up house with Dora Carrington. And in 1918 Keynes met Lydia Lopokova, a prima ballerina in Diaghilev's company. They were married in 1925.

There was nothing *blanc* about the Keyneses' *mariage*. Their hope to have children was disappointed: Keynes made a sad pun about it on his title—barren Keynes. But Lydia was an affectionate and even flamboyant partner. She was, after all, a woman of the theatre. She had had an interesting marital and sexual history before she took up with Keynes, and she was at least as bohemian and risqué as he was. Woolf, who disapproved of the marriage, found her slightly disgusting. Skidelsky reports that during a lull at a dinner given by the American Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Lydia explained to her neighbor that "two men—yes—I can see they've got something to take hold of. But two women—that's impossible. You can't have two insides having an affair." She was not an intellectual, and her grasp of English was comically imperfect, but it was a marriage of mutual devotion. As Skidelsky suggests, Keynes identified with her naughtiness.

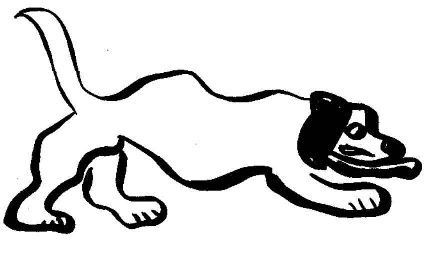
Skidelsky is wisely inconclusive in assessing the bearing of Keynes's sexuality on his economic views. Implicit in those views is a rather sharp distinction between public and private life, with private life given a nearly absolute priority. Keynes learned this distinction from the Cambridge philosopher G. E. Moore, who cast a spell on the whole Bloomsbury group. It is a useful distinction for people interested—as the Stracheys and the Bells and the Woolfs were—in cultivating sexual freedom in a late-Christian, post-Victorian culture. But private life isn't restricted to sex, same or otherwise, and the division between public and private belongs to modern liberalism generally, which holds that one of the purposes of public life is the creation and maintenance of conditions conducive to the pursuit of private happiness, however people choose to define it. This was the principle to which Keynes's economics were devoted.

Those economics are associated today, by non-economists, almost exclusively with the phrase "deficit spending," and this passage, from "The General Theory," is often cited as the essence of Keynes's theory:

> If the Treasury were to fill old bottles with bank-notes, bury them at suitable depths in disused coal-mines which are then filled up to the surface with town rubbish, and leave it to private enterprise on well-tried principles of *laissez-faire* to dig the notes up again . . . there need be no more unemployment and, with the help of the repercussions, the real income of the community, and its capital wealth also, would probably become a good deal greater than it actually is.

But Keynes was responding, in 1936, to a particular economic phenomenon, the Great Depression. And his whimsical notion (he thought, of course, that the money was better spent on houses and highways and hospitals but that, as far as economic recovery was concerned, it didn't really matter) was designed as a solution to that problem, and not as a general policy prescription.

How did Keynes understand the Depression? The answer takes us back to the First World War. Keynes was a flower of the Victorian high bourgeoisie. He grew up in a big house in Cambridge. His father was a university professor and administrator; his mother was active in social causes and eventually became mayor. They were not rich, and it didn't matter a bit. Keynes had the finest education in the world. He wanted for nothing, and felt completely free to choose any occupation he wished. For fifty years, Englishmen—in fact, Europeans generally—of Keynes's class took for granted an economic system that sustained middle-class existence at a remarkably high level of comfort and financial security. All the ritual that Keynes enjoyed belonged to this life, as did the classical education, the prizes, the secret societies and the clubs, the teas and the country-house weekends and the grand tour, and the whole array of institutional arcana that make that culture almost impenetrable to Americans. It was part of what Victorian prosperity had produced—the effect of timelessness, the impression of an eternally self-reproducing world.



As one of that world's consummate products, Keynes was not the first person you would imagine choosing to question its foundations. But he did. The war and its aftermath, he told Virginia Woolf in 1919, made him "disillusioned." "No more does he believe, that is, in the stability of the things he likes," she recorded in her diary:

> Eton is doomed; the governing classes, perhaps Cambridge too. These conclusions were forced on him by the dismal & degrading spectacle of the Peace Congress, where men played shamelessly, not for Europe, or even England, but for their own return to Parliament at the next election.

This was the mood in which Keynes wrote "The Economic Consequences of the Peace." One purpose of the book was to condemn the makers of the Versailles Treaty—Clemenceau, Wilson, and Lloyd George—for sowing the seeds of future war by subjecting Germany to a punitive schedule of reparations. But another was to announce the death of the nineteenth-century system.

Most nineteenth-century economists believed that, with laissez-faire, a system had been invented that would run itself. That belief, Keynes said, was an illusion. The system was entirely artificial, founded, as he put it, on "a double bluff or deception":

> On the one hand the laboring classes accepted from ignorance or powerlessness, or were compelled, persuaded, or cajoled by custom, convention, authority, and the well-established order of society into accepting, a situation in which they could call their own very little of the cake that they and nature and the capitalists were cooperating to produce. And on the other hand the capitalist classes were allowed to call the best part of the cake theirs and were theoretically free to consume it, *on the tacit underlying condition* that they consumed very little of it in practice. The duty of "saving" became nine-tenths of virtue and the growth of the cake the object of true religion.

What made the system work, in other words, was not the economics. It was the psychology. Its members did not behave rationally; they behaved according to custom and moral convention.

Keynes went on to list other one-time factors that had made possible the tremendous accumulation of capital that the Victorian belief in deferred gratification encouraged, such as the opportunity to invest in the New World's expanding economies and to import cheaply the New World's surplus produce. Keynes's point was not that the Victorian system was unjust, or even unsuccessful, but that it was anomalous. It was predicated on circumstances that were not reproducible, and that the war and the settlement that followed it had destroyed. He spent the next seventeen years trying to come up with an alternative system that would preserve the institution of private property. He tried to save capitalism from itself.

The first premise of laissez-faire, or classical, economic theory is that free-market economies are self-regulating and self-optimizing, and that they reach equilibrium at a level of full employment. Wages, prices, savings, and investment all adjust naturally to one another. Efforts by agents outside the system—for instance, politicians—to intervene in economic affairs are therefore always counterproductive. They interfere with the spontaneous operation of market forces.

Keynes attacked the classical premise most succinctly in a little essay, published in 1926, called "The End of Laissez-Faire." It is not outdated yet. "Let us clear from the ground the metaphysical or general principles upon which, from time to time, *laissez-faire* has been founded," he begins.

> It is *not* true that individuals possess a prescriptive "natural liberty" in their economic activities. There is *no* "compact" conferring perpetual rights on those who Have or on those who Acquire. The world is *not* so governed from above that private and social interest always coincide. It is *not* so managed here below that in practice they coincide. It is *not* a correct deduction from the Principles of Economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it *true that self-interest generally* is *enlightened*; more often individuals acting separately to promote their own ends are too ignorant or too weak to attain even these. Experience does *not* show that individuals, when they make up a social unit, are always less clear-sighted than when they act separately.

This sets the terms for the fundamental policy argument of "The General Theory," ten years later. What the Great Depression showed, Keynes explained, was that nineteenth-century economists who believed that the system always reached equilibrium at a level of full employment were wrong. The system could reach equilibrium at *any* level of employment, and there was no point, when it did, in waiting around for it to recover. In a depression, savings are not turned into investments, in the automatic way they are supposed to in classical theory, because businessmen have no incentive to invest when there is no effective demand from consumers for more goods.

Thus the need for public investment—stimulus packages, as they are called today. It is clear that Keynes imagined these as complementary to ordinary market operations, although it is also clear that he thought that if the investment was not substantial it would have no effect. The infusion works through what Keynes's friend and collaborator Richard Kahn called the "multiplier": every unit of extra spending creates income for suppliers of the goods purchased, and this increase in their income allows them to spend money on other goods, thereby increasing the income of suppliers of those goods, and so on. The public investment recoups itself, and the system gets pumped back up.

"The General Theory" had two lessons for economics. The first was the importance of psychology—in a larger sense, of culture—in un-

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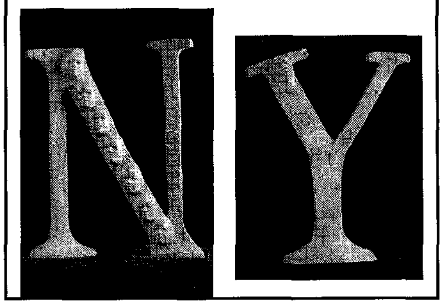

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derstanding how economies function or fail to function. Keynes believed, for example, that one of the banes of modern economies was the love of cash—the tendency to hoard. He thought the purpose of having money was to spend it, and that there was something sick about hiding it in the mattress. Once people became afraid to consume, the economy was bound to suffer. And the second lesson was a generalization from the first. If the purpose of having money is to spend it, the purpose of having an economy is to make a good life possible—not in the sweet by-and-by, as the Victorians believed, but right here, right now, for you and me. It is therefore worse than futile—it is criminal—to sit around and wait for an economy to right itself. If the economy gets stuck, our job is to get it unstuck, and if burying bottles filled with bank notes is the simplest way to manage it there is nothing in nature's law to prevent us from doing so. Keynes wasn't interested in making the system self-correcting. No system can run by itself. The system exists to serve us. *We* have to run it.

In many ways, the essence of Keynes's wisdom is summed up in his most famous epigram (it appears in his "Tract on Monetary Reform," in 1923): "*In the long run* we are all dead." Providence does not wait to reward us for our abstention from present pleasures. Capitalist societies thrive on change and therefore generate uncertainty. Even in the short run, we can barely calculate the risks of our decisions. (This was the problem that Keynes had tried to address in his early work on probability.) If we just sit tight and wait for the world to come around to us, we may not be here when it arrives. Pleasure delayed is often pleasure denied.

Skidelsky, particularly in the first two volumes (for some reason, the thread is dropped in the third), is deft in bringing out this moral implication of Keynes's work; but he is troubled by it, too. He seems to feel that something is dangerous about a society in which there is no philosophical bridge between private happiness and social welfare, a society in which individual life is the only thing that has meaning, and everything else—institutions, customs, traditions, values—is understood to exist only to serve our present happiness.

The fear is possibly exaggerated. Most people run their lives the other way around: the perpetuation and veneration of institutions, customs, traditions, and values is one of the ways they take their enjoyment in life. You can just sit by the pool, it's true, but it gets pretty boring. Still, in the end, people are not fooled. Life is the only thing we're given, and we have to make the most of it. There are moments when we see clearly that the precious social skin we are so careful not to puncture really means very little, just as Keynes saw that the fantastically reticulated "traditional" culture of turn-of-the-century Eton and Cambridge was both a glory and a sham. Those are the moments when we see the imp.

The subtitle of the British edition of Skidelsky's last volume is "Fighting for Britain" (not "Fighting for Freedom"). Keynes gave his last reserves of health to the cause of preserving Britain's global standing in the postwar world, working with the Ambassador to the United States, Lord Halifax (a fellow-Etonian), to secure generous terms from the United States to aid Britain's economic recovery. He failed—but who would not have? The American government was not disposed to give Britain a break on the loan it required, partly because of a distaste for British imperialism and, after 1945, partly because of a distaste for what some American politicians regarded as a socialist government. Mostly, though, the United States saw the war as an opportunity to displace London as the world's financial center (a process that had begun with the First World War) and to make the dollar supreme among world currencies.

At these discussions of postwar financial arrangements, Keynes's powers of expression were in some ways too great. The more eloquent he grew, the more certain the Americans were that they were being outwitted. A little poem was later found among the documents of the discussions:

> In Washington Lord Halifax
> Once whispered to Lord Keynes:
> "It's true *they* have the money bags
> But *we* have all the brains."

The money, as it usually does, beat the brains. ♦

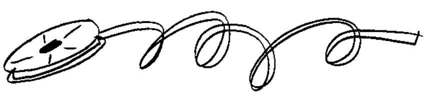
BRIEFLY NOTED

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight, *by Alexandra Fuller (Random House; $24.95).* When the author was growing up, in nineteen-seventies Rhodesia, her parents kept loaded guns by the bed. "Don't startle us when we're sleeping," her mother warned her. "We might shoot you." This memoir of a stubborn, down-on-their-luck, often drunk white family making a last stand against African independence reads like a hard ride over unsafe roads: hair-raising, horrific, and thrilling. One moment Fuller's mother is shooting a cobra in the pantry, the next her sister is calmly baking a cake while armed black soldiers surround the house. The author's honesty about her family's racism is exacting—she recounts how they cheered when they heard mines detonate along the border, because that meant Africans might have been killed—and she delivers an intimate portrait of fierce, flawed lives. Her prose bristles with an unappeased love for Africa and its intense physicality (its smell of "black tea, cut tobacco, fresh fire, old sweat, young grass"). This is Fuller's first book, and already she has a distinctive voice, by turns mischievous and openhearted, earthy and soaring.

The Birds of Heaven, *by Peter Matthiessen (North Point; $27.50).* The poet laureate of nature writers applies his Zen-like intelligence to the world's fifteen surviving species of crane, and examines the ways in which their habitats are defined by the strange behavior of *Homo sapiens.* Along with taxonomy, ethology, and field observation (including what must be the classiest description of crane sex ever written), we see natural history through the lenses of culture, economics, and religion. Matthiessen even visits an "accidental paradise" in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, devoid of human habitation and a home to red-crowned and white-naped cranes. More common, however, are accounts of ecosystems threatened by "frenzied capitalism" and political squabbling. In the face of such loss, the author's tone is elegiac, but he manages to sound notes of wistfulness and optimism together. Elegant color plates of paintings by Robert Bateman are interspersed throughout the text so that the reader may stumble on them like flushed fauna in the wild.

The Sisters: The Saga of the Mitford Family, *by Mary S. Lovell (Norton; $29.95).* "This is not a political book," the author writes, and quotes Lord Longford: "You have to look at that family as *fun.*" Well, perhaps. Of the six sisters, Diana was married to the Fascist politician Oswald Mosley; Unity, obsessed with Hitler, shot herself when England and Germany went to war; Jessica joined the Communist Party. Nancy, of course, wrote delicious, acidic novels; she was also partly responsible for sending her sister Diana to prison. While it seems that every nickname bestowed by the ever-inventive clan is recorded in this fulsome, willfully injudicious volume (Honks, Debo, Bobo, Muv, Farve, Rudbin, Idden, Nanny Blor), the only information that might be called revelatory is that Dinky, Jessica's daughter, is now an emergency nurse specializing in pain management.

6/2/95, *by Donald Breckenridge (Spuyten Duyvil; $14).* Breckenridge, a playwright, here turns the novel into a dramatic form. Fifteen characters—among them a painter, a Salvadoran immigrant, an alcoholic, a single mother, and an unemployed writer—travel through New York City on a single day in 1995. As they pass each other on the street, speak on the phone, make love, argue, cheat, and stand each other up, their paths intersect or narrowly miss in a finely choreographed Altmanesque dance. Breckenridge's paragraphless, interlocked text is at times brilliant, at times confusing, but always surprising, and his bumbling, struggling New York is one we can all recognize.



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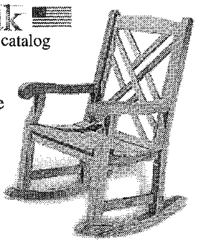

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

MEN'S PICTURES

Why do wild guys suddenly get tame?

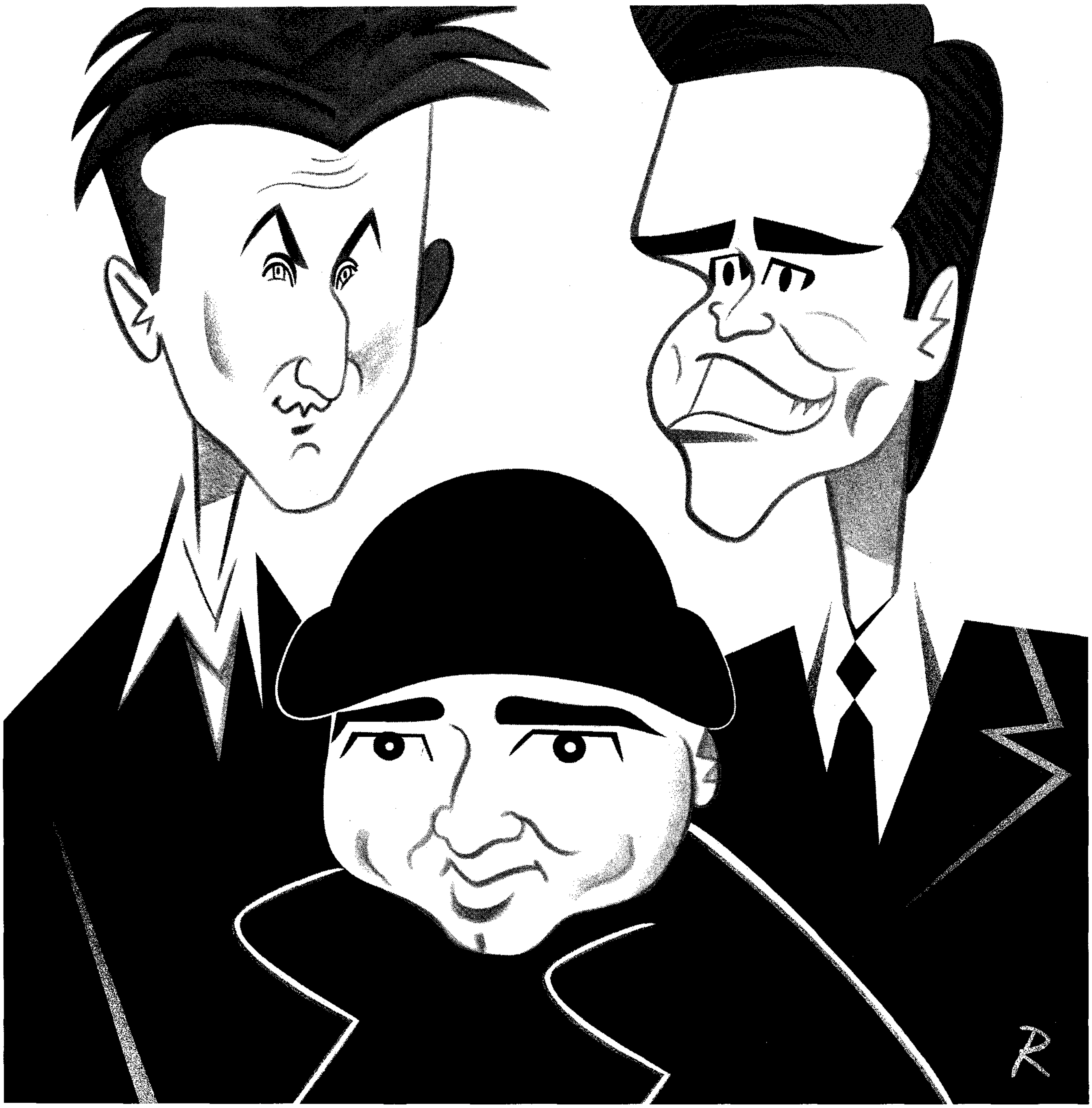
BY DAVID DENBY

In "The Shipping News," Kevin Spacey takes tentative little steps, feet turned in, as if he were shackled, or protecting his privates. Walking in this hapless way, he can't get into a boat without flopping over the gunwales. If there's nothing handy to trip over, he goes and finds something—a rock, maybe—and then trips over it. He speaks in a disembodied voice just above a whisper, and most of the time he's so tearful and cringing that he seems to have stepped out of the pages of early Dickens. "The Shipping News" is only one of three movies released at the end of the year in which famous actors turned themselves into sad sacks. There was also Jim Carrey, in "The Majestic," playing a dopey screenwriter who gets bonked on the head, suffers amnesia, and winds up in a small town on the California coast; and Sean Penn, in "I Am Sam," as a retarded man who wants to keep custody of his daughter. At the end of every year, pathos gets served up as Oscar bait. By awards time, shame and guilt have created a lump in the collective Hollywood throat: goodness and concern for others will shine forth from a half-dozen televised celebrations. It's the audience, however, that may choke on the movies made every year to take advantage of this maudlin and self-dramatizing mood.

A fair number of American movie stars, having arrived at a certain success, appear to fall into a stricken state and seek the light of redemption. Why is that? Perhaps the star, with the highest motives, wants to offer his solidarity with the insulted and the injured. Or reveal a rich inner life—a truer, more melancholy self lodged beneath the surface of the successful performer. Or merely show his ambition and extend his range. Whatever the cause, the actor turns away from the robust, biting, or funny thing that made him a success and dons a suit of misery and woe. Even the redoubtable Jack Nicholson did it, thirty years ago, with a mannered, monotonal performance in "The King of Marvin Gardens." In a similar move, the once irrepressible Robin Williams has made himself into a near-joke in recent years, playing saintly leprechauns and holy innocents in one sickly movie after another ("The Birdcage" was an honorable exception). Omitting no tic, hesitation, or fumble, these virtuoso performers put us through hell. How can we enjoy ourselves? At "The Shipping News," I became so frustrated by Spacey's artificially tiny voice that the muscles in my throat started to constrict, and I had a coughing fit in the theatre. Didn't anyone ever suggest to Spacey that it's often the powerful who are quiet and the impotent who shout? In these flamboyant displays of humility, actors lose their common sense; they forget how hard it is to make weakness or extreme goodness dramatically interesting. Yes, Daniel Day-Lewis had a triumph in "My Left Foot," in 1989, but his character, the Irish artist and writer Christy Brown, who suffered from cerebral palsy, was neither weak nor good; he was brimming with anger and sexual desire. And Russell Crowe survives a conventionally conceived inspirational story in "A Beautiful Mind" by sharpening an edge of provocation in every scene. Day-Lewis and Crowe save us from embarrassment. It may be notable that neither actor is American.

Spacey's work in "The Shipping News," as in "Pay It Forward," is in his new, whipped-dog mode—a direction I hope he takes no further. In these movies, and also in "K-PAX," in which Spacey emerged from a column of light and smiled at the stars, he no longer seems a major actor. His features have turned doughy, his voice lacks its old focus. Defenders will say that in "News," directed by Lasse Hallström, Spacey is only being faithful to E. Annie Proulx's 1993 novel. But that's no excuse for putting flagrant masochism on the screen. Spacey's forlorn Quoyle, nearly drowned as a child by his father, feels as if he were drowning through the rest of his life. He falls in love with a floozy (Cate Blanchett), loses her, goes to Newfoundland with his tough-minded aunt (Judi Dench) and his young daughter, and tries to become a human being. In all, "The Shipping News," adapted by Robert Nelson Jacobs, is a very literary movie. Everyone has a curse or a secret or a tangled knot in his past, and water imagery sloshes all over the place. The movie is exasperating, but Hallström does sustain his moods—the gray light is even and mournfully beautiful, the warmth of the little community huddling against the damp can be touching. In the movie's best moments, the misery has a comic lilt to it: life in the Newfoundland village is so harsh that there's nothing to do but tell wild tales and make jokes. Hallström doesn't press; he lets a scene play. The way he indulges Spacey is a mistake, but he is still a real filmmaker.

I don't know what Frank Darabont, who directed "The Majestic," could be called. A pedantic sentimentalist who wandered into movies, perhaps. The director of the slack, repetitive "The Shawshank Redemption" and the sanctimonious electric-chair pageant "The Green Mile" instructs us in points that we have already understood; he gives religious uplift to outrageously corny scenes; he turns African-Americans into dashboard saints; and, in general, he paces his movies more slowly than the funeral of Edward VII. In "The Majestic," Carrey's Peter Appleton, a hack screenwriter getting by in Hollywood in the early fifties, is mistaken for a war hero in the small town he goes to. He is lionized by the town, adored by a blonde. Since we know he's not a war hero, there is no emotion we can experience through all this celebration but impatience and chagrin. Does the plot sound familiar? It is, of course, a square version of what Preston Sturges pulled off as uproarious satire in "Hail the Conquering Hero," in 1944. Darabont, I suspect, missed his calling as an after-dinner speaker: he gives full rein to the kind of town bores that Sturges, one had thought, chased off the screen forever. And there's an oddity that Stanley Kauffmann mentioned in *The New Republic:* no one in the town seems to have any interest or any work that isn't connected to Jim Carrey. After Appleton leaves town, everyone remains obsessed with him, a bi-



Sean Penn in "I Am Sam," Kevin Spacey in "The Shipping News," and Jim Carrey in "The Majestic."

ROBERT RISKO

zarrely egocentric conception that suggests the truth behind the Hollywood humility racket. Carrey, unable to pretzel himself in this role, has to do a normal job of characterization, but he never fills in the blank spaces in Peter Appleton. His big body becomes lank and useless, the distance between his eyes seems to widen. It's a very dull piece of acting.

After an excruciating beginning, "I Am Sam" tries, with whatever resources of humor and patience it can muster, to come to terms with an impossible subject: a retarded Santa Monica man (Penn) has a brilliant daughter (Dakota Fanning) who reaches the age of seven and begins to surpass him; the authorities want to separate them, but they don't want to be parted. Penn, mouth open, shouting and stammering, plunges deep into Sam's confusions and his innate good-heartedness. The trouble is, Penn doesn't know when to stop. He does every exuberant or despairing emotion, every strange or poetic movement again and again. The star's generosity to a man whose virtue outpaces his intelligence begins to look like a form of showing off; and the writer-director, Jessie Nelson, herself suffers from a surfeit of goodness. She wants to create the entire way of life of Sam and his "challenged" friends, and she overdraws on the audience's kindest impulses. But, just when "I Am Sam" is about to founder in unwatchable sincerity, Michelle Pfeiffer shows up as a lawyer who defends Sam. The lawyer is a beautiful striver, clever and accomplished, but an unhappy wreck, and Pfeiffer, enormously likable in the role, almost saves the movie. All three of these tearstained pictures are a function of male star power. It's a relief to see a woman right the balance, at least for a while, with sanity and humor. ♦

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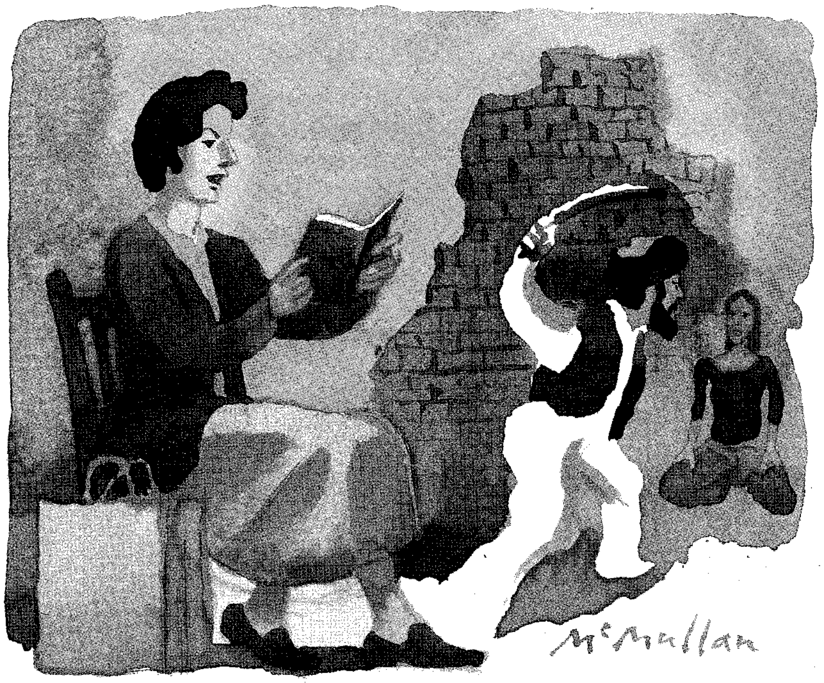
THE THEATRE

AFGHAN TALES

Tony Kushner tackles the recent past.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN



Linda Emond's armchair traveller takes flight in "Homebody/Kabul."

That Tony Kushner's new play, "Homebody/Kabul," which is set in London and Kabul and takes place mostly in 1998, shortly before and shortly after the United States bombed terrorist camps in Afghanistan in response to the two embassy bombings in Africa, happens to be preoccupied with matters that are currently preoccupying everyone in this country, and in much of the world, is astonishing, but, given Kushner's essentially political nature and his concomitant interest in history—his *insistence* on history, really—it should not be altogether surprising. The central character of the play, a nameless woman called the Homebody, says, "We shudder to recall the times through which we have lived, the Recent Past, about which no one wants to think." It is the recent past that Kushner has dared to dramatize in this play, as he did, nearly ten years ago, in the two-part masterwork "Angels in America," which gave the lie to Reagan's hollow claim that "it's morning in America" and then created a vision of what a new dawn might truly look like. Kushner has never hesitated to take on the world; as he wrote in an afterword to "Perestroika," the second part of "Angels," "I wanted to attempt something of ambition and size even if that meant I might be accused of straying too close to ambition's ugly twin, pretentiousness." Kushner's seriocomic "Slavs!," which was staged in 1994 at the New York Theatre Workshop—where "Homebody/Kabul" is now playing, under the direction of Declan Donnellan—and is set in Moscow and Siberia in the years before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is subtitled "Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness." And by happiness, it should be clear, Kushner, a self-described socialist, doesn't mean getting a call from a salesperson at Hermès telling you that the forty-five-hundred-dollar Birkin bag you ordered last year has arrived.

"Homebody/Kabul," which Kushner began working on in 1997, continues the playwright's habit of taking on the world, but, paradoxically, it achieves its

JAMES MCMULLAN

most powerful effects before it ever leaves home. For the entire first act of the play, the Homebody, a middle-aged Englishwoman in matronly clothes, sits in a chair in her house in London and talks to the audience. "Our story begins at the very dawn of history, circa 3000 B.C.," she says, reading from a book; in the first of her many self-interruptions, she informs us that the book is a guide to Kabul, published in 1965, and this fact is the jumping-off point for a thrilling stream of words and a thrilling performance by Linda Emond, which together hold the audience rapt for an hour. But we do not just sit there, dumbly dazzled: our minds rush to keep up with the Homebody, and our hearts race with more emotions than we can sort through, as she alternately reads from the book and tells her own story.

When the world she lives in becomes overwhelming, she takes refuge in the past, finding comfort and order and magic in superannuated books and old magazines, in "hysterical political treatises written by an advocate of some long since defeated or abandoned or transmuted cause." These she finds "irrelevant and irresistible"; and part of what makes her monologue—though that is somehow too leaden a word for the darting charged particles that make up the Homebody's speech—so riveting is that, despite the character's compulsive verbal precision, it's never entirely clear whether her attachment to the dustbin of history has more to do with history or with the dustbin. She says "I love love love love the world!" but she does not expect the world to love her back. Building one of the nutty walls of words that insulate her from disappointment, she says, with apparent acceptance, "I live with the world's mild censure, or would do were it the case that I ever strayed far enough from my modesty, or should I say my essential surfeit of inconsequence, to so far attract the world's attention as to provoke from it its mild censure; but I have never strayed so far from the unlit to the spotlight, and so should say rather that I live with the world's utter indifference, which I have always taken to be a form of censure-in-potentia." We learn that the Homebody is isolated from both her husband and her daughter, and Emond's bright-eyed, eager-to-please look makes us see just how sad it is when someone has nothing to fall in love with other than the sound of her own voice.

Sad, but dangerous, too. The Homebody, going to buy hats for a party, comes face to face with the world she professes to love, only to bend it to her own purposes. Noticing that the shopkeeper, who she assumes is an Afghan, has had three fingers on one of his hands hacked off, she constructs an elaborate fantasy about what happened to him—based on her knowledge of history but not on any knowledge of *his* history—which culminates, in her mind, in the two of them making love under a chinar tree in Kabul. This is the Homebody's way of taking action, of becoming a part of history, and not remaining "suspended in the Rhetorical Colloidal Forever that agglutinates between Might and Do."

In the second act, and for most of the next three hours, we are in Kabul, where the Homebody has gone in pursuit of her romantic notion of engagement. Her husband, Milton, a computer scientist (played by Dylan Baker), and their daughter, Priscilla (Kelly Hutchinson), have followed her there—not to join her but to collect her body. As she said, with pleasure, in the first act, there are "consequences to *everything*," and she has met her end at the hands of the Taliban. (Her grisly death is described by a doctor in dense medical terminology that she would have appreciated.) The imaginative leaps of Act I, which suggest from afar the complexity of Afghanistan, now give way to confusion on the ground. There are eight Afghan characters, some of whom seem to be fashioned out of newspapers rather than flesh and blood, and are sometimes hard to understand, especially when they are speaking in untranslated Pashto, Dari, or French. You have a sense of Kushner's having rounded up the usual suspects, with each foreigner "representing" something. There's even a British aid worker who, in homage to the rottenness around him, has become a heroin addict; you can almost see a ceiling fan turning slowly, futilely above him. But such is the strength of the first act that the sense of loss and of something important's being at stake carries through most of the play. Kushner, a writer who is always on high alert to humanity as well as history, has, in the Homebody, created a character—an "impassioned, fluttery, doomed" character—who is timeless as well as timely. ◆

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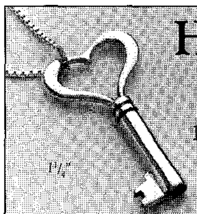

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THE ART WORLD

NIGHT MOVES

The indifferent grandeur of Bruce Nauman.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Bruce Nauman's "Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)," a video installation that has opened at the Dia Center for the Arts, is five hours and forty-five minutes long. It consists of seven large DVD projections (each about twelve feet high by fifteen feet across) on the walls of a cavernous room. The gray-green images, shot in darkness by infrared light, are low-angled, static views of small areas inside Nauman's studio at his ranch, in Galisteo, New Mexico. They are still-lifes, essentially, though at varying intervals they are animated by skittering mice, a prowling black cat, and a streaking moth or two. The animals' eyes glow spookily. Night sounds are heard: wind, barking dogs, a faraway train whistle, a water heater kicking on, a violent spate of rain, an insect bumping against the microphone, desultory vocalizations of the cat. Using a relatively cheap automatic camera, Nauman taped the footage in hour-long chunks over a period of several months in 2000. Abrupt changes in a scene—objects appearing, disappearing, or shifting—indicate the start of a new segment. Once in a while, the artist's cowboy-booted legs can be glimpsed leaving the premises after he has turned on the camera. The enlarged digital images flutter and shimmer, as the camera's dithering sensor continually readjusts to the lights and shadows. The over-all effect is swimmy and subaqueous.

Nauman, who is sixty years old, is the most durably respected and controversial of living artists. Some people, who object to his controlling, hermetic ways, can't stand him. Others—Naumanians, if you will—hang on his productions as on the utterances of an oracle. (I'm a Naumanian.) Nauman was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the son of a salesman for General Electric. At the University of Wisconsin, he pursued serious studies in mathematics and music, and then abandoned them in favor of old-fashioned training in drawing and painting. He discovered contemporary art on visits to the Art Institute of Chicago. At the University of California, Davis, in 1964, he went cutting-edge with a run of exploratory works in many mediums. These led to a dazzling show at the Leo Castelli Gallery, in 1968.

The hermetic theatre of "Mapping the Studio I." Photograph by Julien Goldstein.

Nauman is commonly regarded, along with Richard Serra and the late Eva Hesse, as one of the Big Three innovators of post-minimalism. From the Bay Area, he moved first to Pasadena and then, in 1979, to New Mexico. There Nauman trains horses and raises cattle, among other activities that help him to weather legendary spells of artist's block. A persistent theme in his work is the question of what, if anything, it means to be an artist alone in a studio, faced with the daunting challenge of making something out of nothing. One iconic early work is a spiral neon sign that reads, "The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths." Is this profundity or rubbish? It's both and neither; it's Nauman.

"Mapping" recalls the pioneering videos that showed the young Nauman taking gruelling, choreographed walks in his empty studio. Those works played with the notion of the artist as a cottage industrialist of meaning, whose every deliberate action in his working space can't help but be art. Nauman was responding to a cultural situation that was new in the sixties: the dubiously avid embrace of formerly underground avant-gardism by mainstream audiences. His stance was aggressively skeptical. Nauman's formative influences included Marcel Duchamp, Samuel Beckett, and Ludwig Wittgenstein—masters of doubt. In works that featured nerve-racking environments (a corridor so narrow that you could pass through it only sideways; an empty gallery in which his recorded voice could be heard snarling, "Get out of my mind, get out of this room!"), he made caustically whimsical pocket theatre out of his own painful self-consciousness, as if to signal the ridiculousness of the whole enterprise. In that period, Nauman alienated quite a few viewers. I remember feeling threatened, almost to the point of panic, by works that imposed themselves mentally as Serra's looming sculptures do physically. But gradually I got the hang of Nauman's honesty, of his self-abnegating discipline. He plays rough but fair. He has influenced generations of artists as a free-floating con-science—producing art out of the deepest, most stubborn anxieties of their common vocation.

I've experienced most of "Mapping" in one of the rolling and swivelling chairs that Dia thoughtfully provides. By my calculation, it would take roughly forty hours and fifteen minutes to miss nothing in any of the projections. (Expect a few dedicated art students to log the full vigil.) I was bored for a while, then intermittently entranced, and, finally, drawn into pleasurable states of meditation. I found myself rooting idly for the cat to catch a mouse. (Doesn't happen.) The studio's clutter—bits of sculpture, crates, buckets, a drawing in progress, chairs, tools, unidentifiable detritus—became talismanic, as warming and worrisome as if it were my own. Nauman's work often weaves a spell that might be called ready-to-wear narcissism—an acute self-awareness belonging to no one in particular. There is no Nauman style. Many of his works convey emotional tones that are palpably antic or sorrowing or angry, but what he shares with viewers is, ultimately, the heavy calm of his loneliness. With "Mapping," the tranquillity feels subtly dire. What happens to one's creations and possessions—one's world—when one is gone from them? They continue to exist, indifferently and very nicely, "Mapping" answers with a whiff of dread.

Nauman promises to follow this piece with three considerably more entertaining versions of the same material. An "All Action Edit"—composed, he told me, at the impatient request of his wife, the painter Susan Rothenberg—will reduce the footage of each section to more or less an hour's worth of moments in which something moves. "Mapping the Studio II" and its own "All Action" variant will add color to the projections and subject them to jazzy editing, at which Nauman is a maestro. When those versions become available to curators and dealers, the austere "Mapping I" may never be shown again. Knowing this gives one's attendance a historic and virtuous savor. (A commemorative T-shirt might be in order.)

Nauman says that "Fat Chance John Cage," the subtitle of "Mapping," preceded and may have germinated the piece. He came up with the sassy phrase as a work in itself for a proposed group show in London, in which artists were invited to pay tribute to the late aleatory composer, who was an important influence on Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, among others. Is Nauman for or against Cage? Both, I think. Given that the most continuously engaging aspect of "Mapping" is the product of its seven soundtracks, the work might be considered a Cagean concert with visual accompaniment. The visual elements are Cage-ish, too. They record the eponymous activity—mapping—by mice, bugs, and a cat. Little by little, the critters visit and trace just about every object and every contour of the given spaces. But the spaces and their contents aren't neutral; they represent somebody's life. And the surveyors are vectors of feral energy, as pitiless as cemetery worms. Cage, the sunny guru of silences and random sounds, endorsed chance as liberating and fun. Nauman gives us the bad news: chance is the universe's way of telling us that we reason and desire in vain.

Nauman's reputation comes as close to being global as that of any other contemporary artist. A mark of his success is the scrappy look of a studio in which finished work never stays for long. Only useful things maintain dignity in it: chairs, a sink, the cat's litter box. (Come to think of it—and "Mapping" affords nothing if not time to think—a litter box is a stirring emblem of nature in amiable accord with culture.) The rest is evidence of former exertions, which, like words repeated until they become nonsense, seem increasingly pointless. This effect is desolating, even scary. But stick around. There is reassuring grandeur in the scale and unity of the piece, hinting at an order of comprehension beyond the personal and even the human. Meaning persists as a possibility that cannot be eliminated. Nauman told me that, soon after the cat's star turn, the animal disappeared, probably a victim of coyotes. After that, he had the mice exterminated. Life goes on, if only because it has nowhere else to go. ♦

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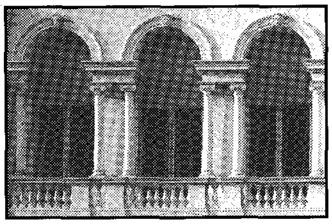

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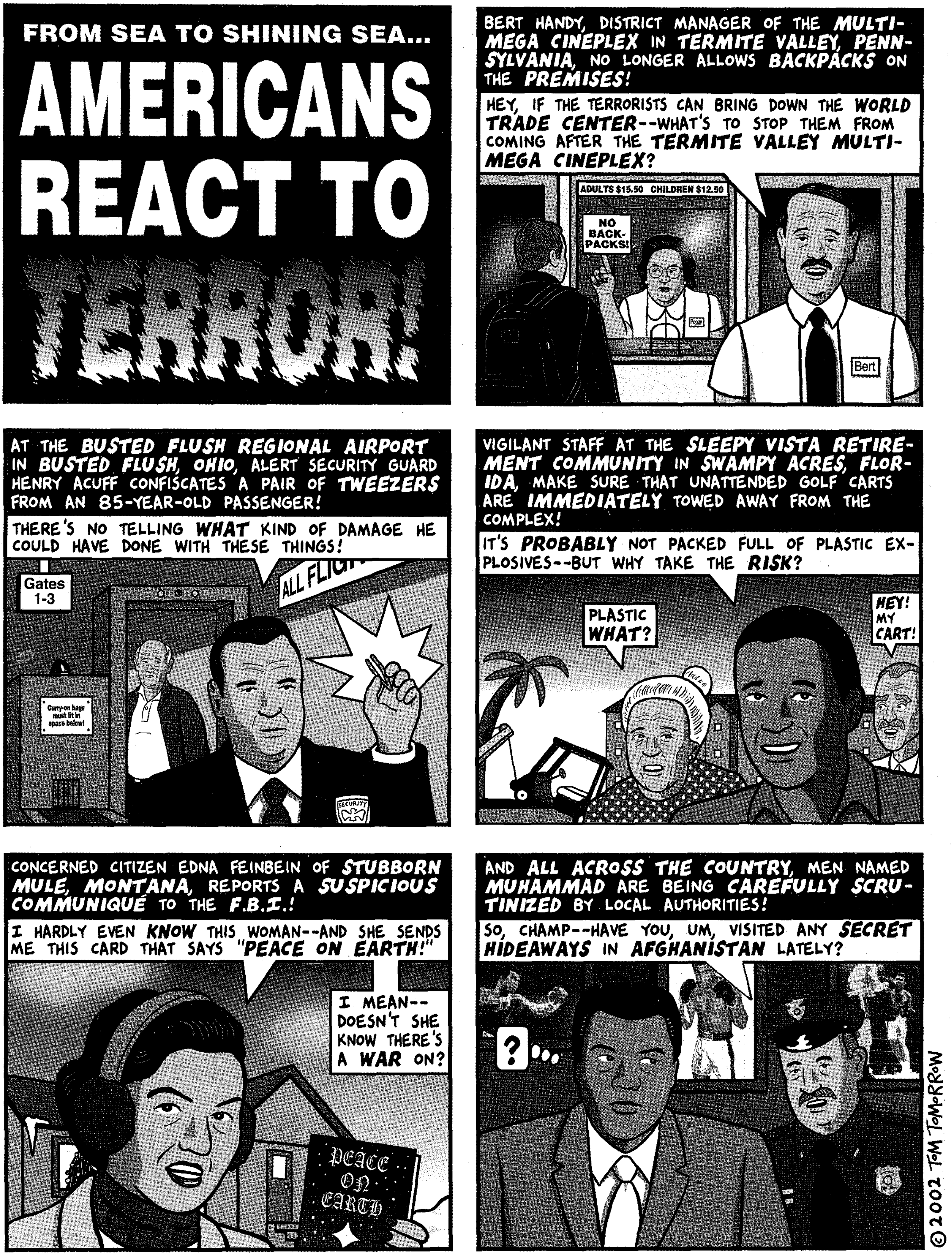
FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA...
AMERICANS REACT TO TERROR!
BERT HANDY, DISTRICT MANAGER OF THE MULTI-MEGA CINEPLEX IN TERMITE VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA, NO LONGER ALLOWS BACKPACKS ON THE PREMISES!
HEY, IF THE TERRORISTS CAN BRING DOWN THE WORLD TRADE CENTER--WHAT'S TO STOP THEM FROM COMING AFTER THE TERMITE VALLEY MULTI-MEGA CINEPLEX?
ADULTS $15.50 CHILDREN $12.50
NO BACK-PACKS!
Peggy
Bert
AT THE BUSTED FLUSH REGIONAL AIRPORT IN BUSTED FLUSH, OHIO, ALERT SECURITY GUARD HENRY ACUFF CONFISCATES A PAIR OF TWEEZERS FROM AN 85-YEAR-OLD PASSENGER!
THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT KIND OF DAMAGE HE COULD HAVE DONE WITH THESE THINGS!
Gates 1-3
ALL FLIGH
Carry-on bags must fit in space below!
SECURITY
VIGILANT STAFF AT THE SLEEPY VISTA RETIREMENT COMMUNITY IN SWAMPY ACRES, FLORIDA, MAKE SURE THAT UNATTENDED GOLF CARTS ARE IMMEDIATELY TOWED AWAY FROM THE COMPLEX!
IT'S PROBABLY NOT PACKED FULL OF PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES--BUT WHY TAKE THE RISK?
PLASTIC WHAT?
HEY! MY CART!
CONCERNED CITIZEN EDNA FEINBEIN OF STUBBORN MULE, MONTANA, REPORTS A SUSPICIOUS COMMUNIQUÉ TO THE F.B.I.!
I HARDLY EVEN KNOW THIS WOMAN--AND SHE SENDS ME THIS CARD THAT SAYS "PEACE ON EARTH!"
I MEAN--DOESN'T SHE KNOW THERE'S A WAR ON?
PEACE ON EARTH
AND ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, MEN NAMED MUHAMMAD ARE BEING CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES!
SO, CHAMP--HAVE YOU, UM, VISITED ANY SECRET HIDEAWAYS IN AFGHANISTAN LATELY?
?...
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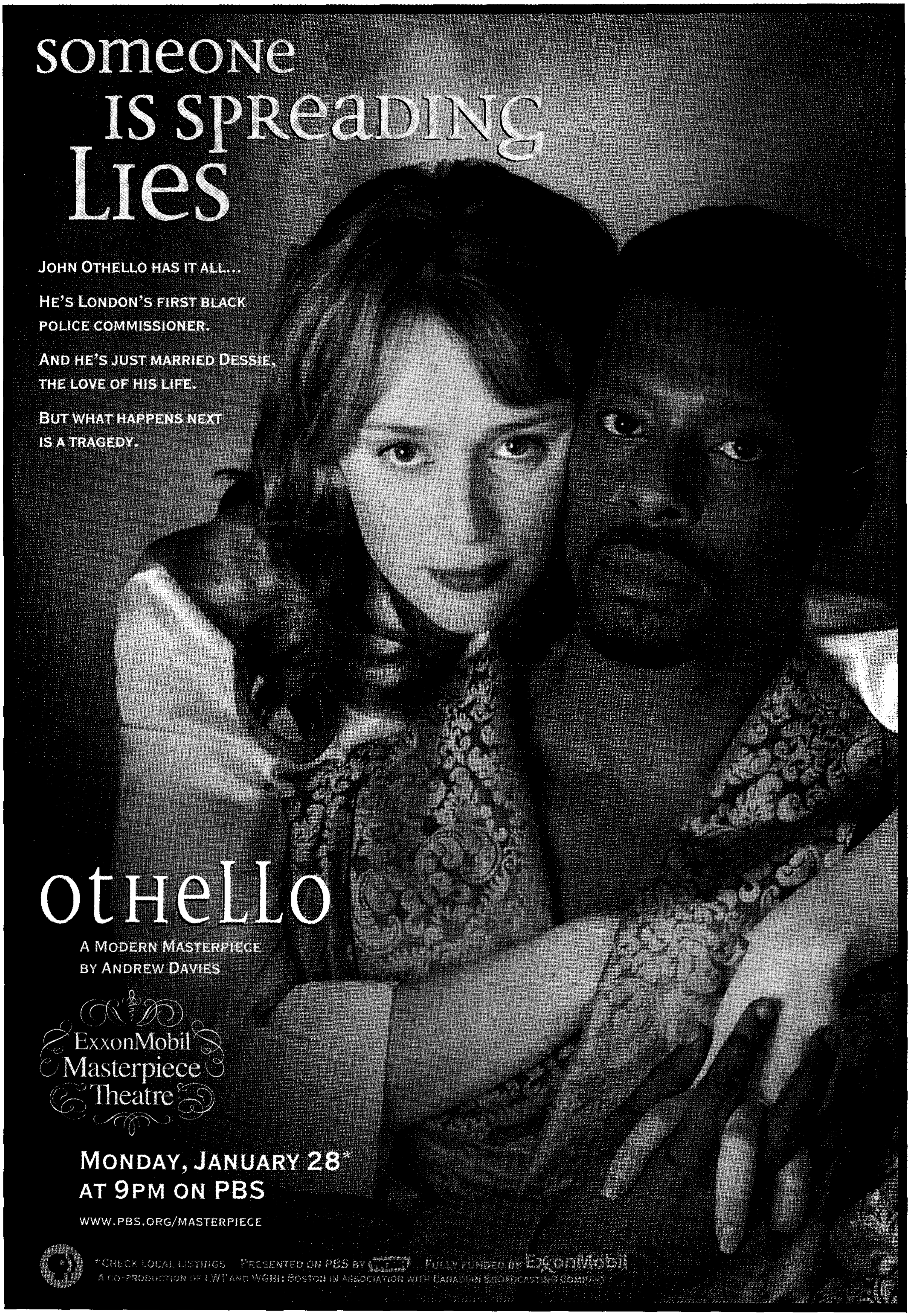

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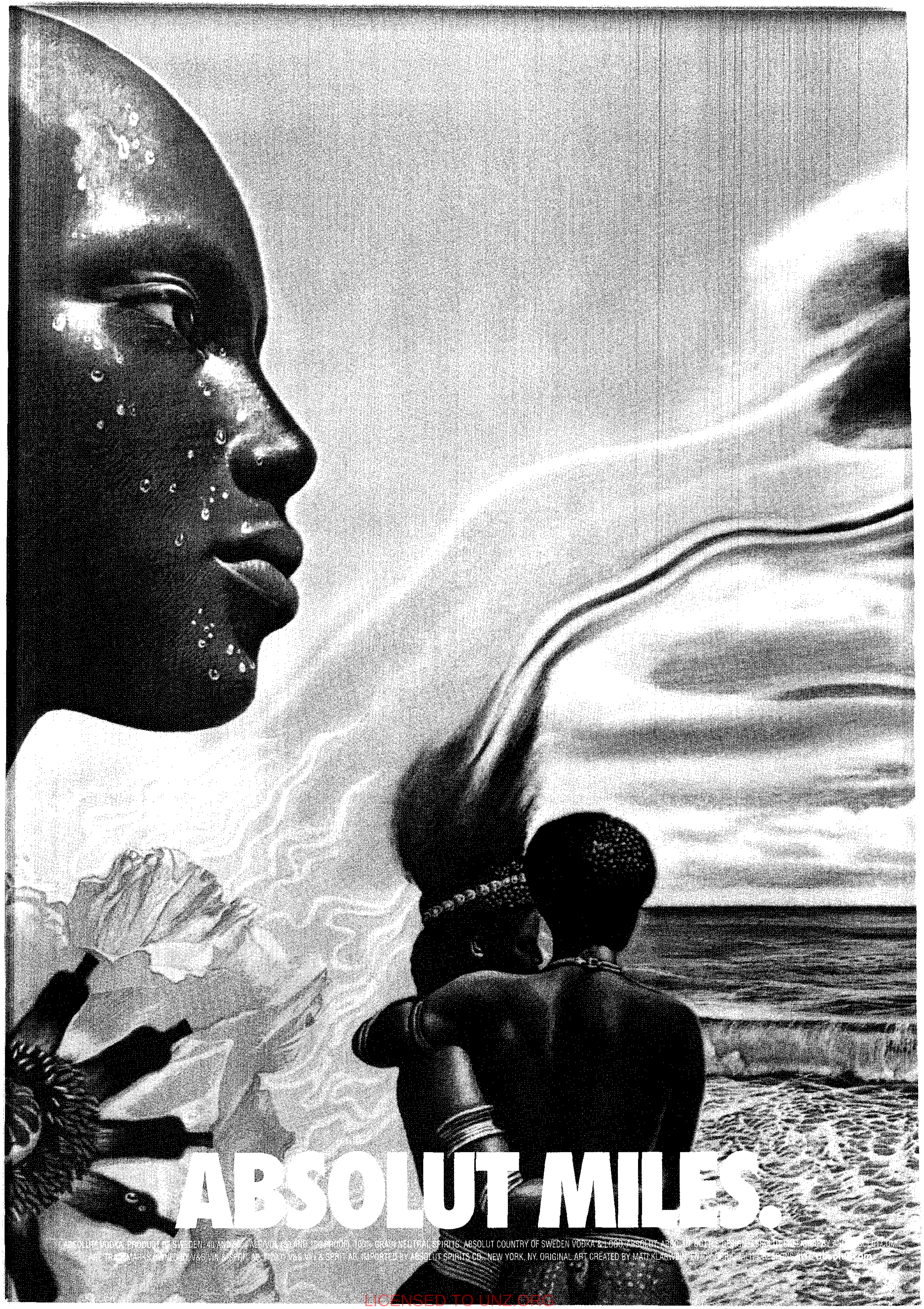
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